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THE FIRST VIOLIN

A NOVEL BY JESSIE FOTHERGILL

With Illustrations

BY

G. W. BRENNEMAN

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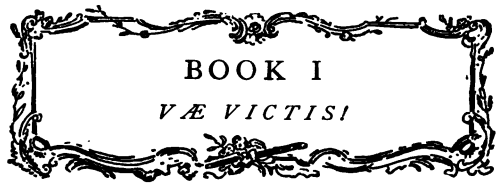
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THE FIRST VIOLIN



CHAPTER I

" Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath,
Dass man vom Liebsten, was man hat,
Muss scheiden."

OUR merry little *Zauberfest* of Christmas eve was over. Christmas morning came. I remember that morning well —a gray, neutral kind of day, whose monotony outside emphasized the keenness of emotion within.

On that morning the postman came—a rather rare occurrence with us; for, except with notes from pupils, notices of Proben, or other official communications, he seldom troubled us.

It was Sigmund who opened the door; it was he who took the letter, and wished the postman " good-morning " in his courteous little way. I dare say that the incident gave an additional pang afterwards to the father if he

marked it, and seldom did the smallest act or movement of his child escape him.

"Father, here is a letter," he said, giving it into Eugen's hand.

"Perhaps it is for Friedel; thou art too ready to think that everything appertains to thy father," said Eugen with a smile, as he took the letter and looked at it; but before he had finished speaking the smile had faded. There remained a whiteness, a blank, a haggardness.

I had caught a glimpse of the letter; it was large, square, massive, and there was a seal upon the envelope—a regular letter of fate out of a romance.

Eugen took it into his hand, and for once he made no answer to the caress of his child, who put his arms round his neck and wanted to climb upon his knee. He allowed the action, but passively.

"Let me open it!" cried Sigmund. "Let me open thy letter!"

"No, no, child!" said Eugen, in a sharp, pained tone. "Let it alone."

Sigmund looked surprised, and recoiled a little; a shock clouding his eyes. It was all right if his father said no, but a shade presently crossed his young face. His father did not usually speak so; did not usually have that white and pallid look about the eyes—above all, did not look at his son with a look that meant nothing.

Eugen was usually prompt enough in all he did, but he laid aside that letter, and proposed in a subdued tone that we should have breakfast. Which we had, and still the

letter lay unopened. And when breakfast was over he even took up his violin and played runs and shakes and scales—and the air of a drinking song, which sounded grotesque in contrast with the surroundings. This lasted for some time, and yet the letter was not opened. It seemed as if he could not open it. I knew that it was with a desperate effort that he at last took it up, and—went into his room and shut the door.

I was reading—that is, I had a book in my hands, and was stretched out in the full luxury of an unexpected holiday upon the couch; but I could no more have read under the new influence, could no more have helped watching Sigmund, than I could help breathing and feeling.

He, Sigmund, stood still for a moment, looking at the closed door; gazing at it as if he expected it to open, and a loved hand to beckon him within. But it remained pitilessly shut, and the little boy had to accommodate himself as well as he could to a new phase in his mental history—the being excluded—left out in the cold. After making an impulsive step towards the door he turned; plunged his hands into his pockets as if to keep them from attacking the handle of that closed door, and walking to the window, gazed out, silent and motionless. I watched: I was compelled to watch. He was listening with every faculty, every fibre, for the least noise, the faintest movement from the room from which he was shut out. I did not dare to speak to him. I was very miserable myself; and a sense of coming loss and disaster was driven firmly into my mind and fixed there—a heavy prevision of inevi-

table sorrow and pain overhung my mind. I turned to my book and tried to read. It was one of the most delightful of romances that I held—no other than the *Kinder der Welt*—and the scene was that in which Edwin and Toinette make that delightful, irregular Sunday excursion to Charlottenburg, but I understood none of it. With that pathetic little real figure taking up so much of my consciousness, and every moment more insistently so, I could think of nothing else.

Dead silence from the room within; utter and entire silence, which lasted so long that my misery grew acute, and still that little figure, which was now growing terrible to me, neither spoke nor stirred. I do not know how long by the clock we remained in these relative positions; by my feelings it was a week; by those of Sigmund, I doubt not, a hundred years. But he turned at last, and with a face from which all trace of color had fled walked slowly towards the closed door.

"Sigmund!" I cried in a loud whisper. "Come here, my child! Stay here, with me."

"I must go in," said he. He did not knock. He opened the door softly, and went in, closing it after him. I know not what passed. There was silence as deep as before, after one short, inarticulate murmur. There are some moments in this our life which are at once sacrificial, sacramental, and strong with the virtue of absolution for sins past; moments which are a crucible from which a stained soul may come out white again. Such were these—I know it now—in which father and son were alone together.

After a short silence, during which my book hung unheeded from my hand, I left the house, out of a sort of respect for my two friends. I had nothing particular to do, and so strolled aimlessly about, first into the *Hofgarten*, where I watched the Rhine, and looked Hollandwards along its low, flat shores, to where there was a bend, and beyond the bend, Kaiserswerth. It is now long since I saw *the* river. Fair are his banks higher up—not at Elberthal would he have struck the stranger as being a stream for which to fight and die; but to me there is no part of his banks so lovely as the poor old *Schöne Aussicht* in the Elberthal *Hofgarten* from whence I have watched the sun set flaming over the broad water, and felt my heart beat to the sense of precious possessions in the homely town behind. Then I strolled through the town, and coming down the *Königsallée*, beheld some bustle in front of a large, imposing-looking house, which had long been shut up and uninhabited. It had been a venture by a too shortly successful banker. He had built the house, lived in it three months, and finding himself bankrupt, had one morning disposed of himself by cutting his throat. Since then the house had been closed, and had had an ill-name, though it was the handsomest building in the most fashionable part of the town, with a grand *porte-cochère* in front, and a pleasant, enticing kind of bowery garden behind—the house faced the *Exerzierplatz*, and was on *the* promenade of Elberthal. A fine chestnut avenue made the street into a pleasant wood, and yet *Königsallée* No. 3, always looked deserted and depressing. I paused to watch the

workmen who were throwing open the shutters and uncovering the furniture. There were some women-servants busy with brush and duster in the hall, and a splendid barouche was being pushed through the *porte-cochère* into the back premises: a couple of trim-looking English grooms with four horses followed.

"Is some one coming to live here?" I demanded of a workman, who made answer:

"*Ja wol!* A rich English milord has taken the house furnished for six months—Sir Le Marchant, *oder so etwas.* I do not know the name quite correctly. He comes in a few days."

"So!" said I, wondering what attraction Elberthal could offer to a rich English sir or milord, and feeling at the same time a mild glow of curiosity as to him and his circumstances, for I humbly confess it—I had never seen an authentic milord. Elberthal and Köln were almost the extent of my travels, and I only remembered that at the *Niederrheinische Musikfest* last year, some one had pointed out to me a decrepit-looking old gentleman, with a bottle-nose and a meaningless eye, as a milord—very, very rich, and exceedingly good. I had sorrowed a little at the time in thinking that he did not personally better grace his circumstances and character, but until this moment I had never thought of him again.

"That is his secretary," pursued the workman to me, in an undertone, as he pointed out a young man who was standing in the middle of the hall, note-book in hand, "Herr Arkwright. He is looking after us."



"When does the *Engländer* come?"

"In a few days, with his servants and milady, and milady's maid and dogs and bags and everything. And she—milady—is to have *those* rooms"—he pointed overhead, and grinned—"those, where Banquier Klein was found with his throat cut. *Hè!*"

He laughed, and began to sing lustily, "*In Berlin, sagt' er.*"

After giving one more short survey to the house, and wondering why the apartments of a suicide should be assigned to a young and beautiful woman (for I instinctively judged her to be young and beautiful), I went on my way, and my thoughts soon returned to Eugen and Sigmund, and that trouble which I felt was hanging inevitably over us.

* * * * *

Eugen was, that evening, in a mood of utter, cool aloofness. His trouble did not appear to be one that he could confide—at present, at least. He took up his violin, and discoursed most eloquent music, in the dark, to which music Sigmund and I listened. Sigmund sat upon my knee, and Eugen went on playing—improvising, or rather speaking the thoughts which were uppermost in his heart. It was wild, strange, melancholy, sometimes sweet, but ever with a ringing note of woe so piercing as to stab, recurring perpetually—such a note as comes throbbing to life now and then in the *Sonate Pathétique*, or in Raff's Fifth Symphony.

Eugen always went to Sigmund after he had gone to bed, and talked to him or listened to him. I do not know if he

taught him something like a prayer at such times, or spoke to him of supernatural things, or upon what they discoursed. I only know that it was an interchange of soul, and that usually he came away from it looking glad. But to-night, after remaining longer than usual, he returned with a face more haggard than I had seen it yet.

He sat down opposite me at the table, and there was silence, with an ever-deepening, sympathetic pain on my part. At last I raised my eyes to his face; one elbow rested upon the table, and his head leaned upon his hand. The lamplight fell full upon his face, and there was that in it which would let me be silent no longer, any more than one could see a comrade bleeding to death, and not try to stanch the wound. I stepped up to him, and laid my hand upon his shoulder. He looked up drearily, unrecognizingly, unsmilingly at me.

"Eugen, what hast thou?"

"*La mort dans l'âme,*" he answered, quoting from a poem which we had both been reading.

"And what has caused it?"

"Must you know, friend?" he asked. "If I did not need to tell it, I should be very glad."

"I must know it, or—or leave you to it!" said I, choking back some emotion. "I cannot pass another day like this."

"And I had no right to let you spend such a day as this," he answered. "Forgive me once again, Friedel—you who have forgiven so much and so often."

"Well," said I, "let us have the worst, Eugen. It is something about——"

I glanced towards the door, on the other side of which Sigmund was sleeping.

His face became set, as if of stone. One word, and one alone, after a short pause, passed his lips—"*Ja!*"

I breathed again. It was so then.

"I told you, Friedel, that I should have to leave him."

The words dropped out one by one from his lips, distinct, short, steady.

"Yes."

"That was bad, very bad. The worst, I thought, that could befall; but it seems that my imagination was limited."

"Eugen, *what is it?*"

"I shall not have to leave him. I shall have to send him away from me."

As if with the utterance of the words, the very core and fibre of resolution melted away and vanished, and the broken spirit turned writhing and shuddering from the phantom that extended its arms for the sacrifice, he flung his arms upon the table; his shoulders heaved. I heard two suppressed, choked-down sobs—the sobs of a strong man—strong alike in body and mind: strongest of all in the heart and spirit and purpose to love and cherish.

"*La mort dans l'âme,*" indeed! He could have chosen no fitter expression.

"Send him away!" I echoed, beneath my breath.

"Send my child away from me—as if I—did not—want him," said Courvoisier slowly, and in a voice made low and halting with anguish, as he lifted his gaze, dim with



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the desperate pain of coming parting, and looked me in the face.

I had begun in an aimless manner to pace the room; my heart on fire, my brain reaching wildly after some escape from the fetters of circumstance, invisible but iron-strong, relentless as clamps and glaives of tempered steel. I knew no *reason*, of course. I knew no outward circumstances of my friend's life or destiny. I did not wish to learn any. I did know that since he said it was so it must be so. Sigmund must be sent away! He—we—must be left alone; two poor men, with the brightness gone from our lives.

The scene does not let me rightly describe it. It was an anguish allied in its intensity to that of Gethsemane. Let me relate it as briefly as I can.

I made no spoken assurance of my sympathy. I winced almost at the idea of speaking to him. I knew then that we may contemplate, or believe we contemplate, some coming catastrophe for years, believing that so the suffering, when it finally falls, will be lessened. This is a delusion. Let the blow rather come short, sharp, and without forewarning: preparation heightens the agony.

"Friedel," said he at last, "you do not ask why must this be."

"I do not need to ask why. I know that it must be, or you would not do it."

"I would tell you if I could—if I might."

"For heaven's sake, don't suppose that I wish to pry——" I began. He interrupted me.

"You will make me laugh in spite of myself," said he. "*You* wish to pry! Now, let me see how much more I can tell you. You perhaps think it wrong, in an abstract light, for a father to send his young son away from him. That is because you do not know what I do. If you did, you would say, as I do, that it must be so—— I never saw it till now. That letter was a revelation. It is now all as clear as sunshine."

I assented.

"Then you consent to take my word that it must be so, without more."

"Indeed, Eugen, I wish for no more."

He looked at me. "If I were to tell you," said he suddenly, and an impulsive light beamed in his eyes. A look of *relief*—it was nothing else—of hope, crossed his face. Then he sank again into his former attitude—as if tired and wearied with some hard battle: exhausted, or what we more expressively call *niedergeschlagen.*

"Now something more," he went on; and I saw the frown of desperation that gathered upon his brow. He went on quickly, as if otherwise he could not say what had to be said: "When he goes from me, he goes to learn to become a stranger to me. I promise not to see him, nor write to him, nor in any way communicate with him, or influence him. We part—utterly and entirely."

"Eugen! Impossible! *Herrgott!* Impossible!" cried I, coming to a stop, and looking incredulously at him. That I did not believe. "Impossible!" I repeated beneath my breath.

"By faith men can move mountains," he retorted.

This, then, was the flavoring which made the cup so intolerable.

"You say that that is, and must be, wrong under all circumstances," said Eugen, eying me steadily.

I paused. I could almost have found it in my heart to say "Yes, I do." But my faith in, and love for this man had grown with me: as a daily prayer grows part of one's thoughts, so was my confidence in him part of my mind. He looked as if he were appealing to me to say that it must be wrong, and so give him some excuse to push it aside. But I could not. After wavering for a moment I answered:

"No. I am sure you have sufficient reasons."

"I have. God knows I have."

In the silence that ensued, my mind was busy. Eugen Courvoisier was not a religious man, as the popular meaning of religious runs. He did not say of his misfortune, "It is God's will," nor did he add, "and therefore sweet to me." He said nothing of whose will it was; but I felt that had that cause been a living thing—had it been a man, for instance, he would have gripped it and fastened to it until it lay dead and impotent, and he could set his heel upon it.

But it was no strong, living, tangible thing. It was a breathless abstraction—a something existing in the minds of men, and which they call "Right!" and being that—not an outside law which an officer of the law could enforce upon him: being that abstraction, he obeyed it.

As for saying that because it was right he liked it, or

felt any consolation from the knowledge—he never once pretended to any such thing; but, true to his character of Child of the World, hated it with a hatred as strong as his love to the creature which it deprived him of. Only—he did it. He is not alone in such circumstances. Others have obeyed and will again obey this invisible law in circumstances as anguishing as those in which he stood: will steel their hearts to hardness while every fibre cries out, "Relent!" or will like him writhe under the lash, shake their chained hands at heaven, and—submit.

"One more question, Eugen. *When?*"

"Soon."

"A year would seem soon to any of us three."

"In a very short time. It may be in weeks: it may be in days. Now, Friedhelm, have a little pity and don't probe any further."

But I had no need to ask any more questions. The dreary evening passed somehow over—and bedtime came, and the morrow dawned.

For us three it brought the knowledge that for an indefinite time retrospective happiness must play the part of sun on our mental horizon.



CHAPTER II

"My Lady's Glory"

"KÖNIGSALLÉE, NO. 3," wrote Adelaide to me, "is the house which has been taken for us. We shall be there on Tuesday evening."

I accepted this communication in my own sense, and

did not go to meet Adelaide, nor visit her that evening, but wrote a card, saying I would come on the following morning. I had seen the house which had been taken for Sir Peter and Lady Le Marchant—a large, gloomy-looking house, with a tragedy attached to it, which had stood empty ever since I had come to Elberthal.

Up the fashionable Königsallée, under the naked chestnut avenue, and past the great long Caserne and *Exerzierplatz*—a way on which I did not as a rule intrude my ancient and poverty-stricken garments, I went, on the morning after Adelaide's arrival. Lady Le Marchant had not yet left her room, but if I were Miss Wedderburn I was to be taken to her immediately. Then I was taken upstairs, and had time to remark upon the contrast between my sister's surroundings and my own, before I was delivered over to a lady's-maid—French in nationality—who opened a door and announced me as Mademoiselle Veddairebairne.

I had a rapid, dim impression that it was quite the chamber of a *grande dame*, in the midst of which stood my lady herself, having slowly risen as I came in.

"At last you have condescended to come," said the old proud curt voice.

"How are you, Adelaide?" said I originally, feeling that any display of emotion would be unwelcome and inappropriate, and moreover, feeling any desire to indulge in the same suddenly evaporate.

She took my hand loosely, gave me a little chilly kiss on the cheek, and then held me off at arm's length to look at me.

I did not speak. I could think of nothing agreeable to say. The only words that rose to my lips were "How very ill you look!" and I wisely concluded *not* to say them. She was very beautiful, and looked prouder and more imperious than ever. But she was changed. I could not tell what it was. I could find no name for the subtle alteration: ere long I knew only too well what it was. Then, I only knew that she was different from what she had been, and different in a way that aroused tenfold all my vague forebodings.

She was wasted too—had gone, for her, quite thin; and the repressed restlessness of her eyes made a disagreeable impression upon me. Was she perhaps wasted with passion and wicked thoughts? She looked as if it would not have taken much to bring the smouldering fire into a blaze of full fury—as if fire and not blood ran in her veins.

She was in a loose silk dressing-gown, which fell in long folds about her stately figure. Her thick black hair was twisted into a knot about her head. She was surrounded on all sides with rich and costly things. All the old severe simplicity of style had vanished—it seemed as if she had gratified every passing fantastic wish or whim of her restless, reckless spirit, and the result was a curious medley of the ugly, grotesque, ludicrous and beautiful—a feverish dream of Cleopatra-like luxury, in the midst of which she stood, as beautiful and sinuous as a serpent, and looking as if she could be, upon occasion, as poisonous as the same.

She looked me over from head to foot with piercing eyes, and then said, half-scornfully, half-enviously:

"How well a stagnant life seems to suit some people. Now you—you are immensely improved—unspeakably improved. You have grown into a pretty woman—more than a pretty woman. I shouldn't have thought a few months *could* make such an alteration in any one."

Her words struck me as a kind of satire upon herself.

"I might say the same to you," said I, constrainedly. "I think you are very much altered."

Indeed I felt strangely ill at ease with the beautiful creature who, I kept trying to convince myself, was my sister Adelaide, but who seemed farther apart from me than ever. But the old sense of fascination which she had been wont to exercise over me returned again in all or in more than its primitive strength.

"I want to talk to you," said she, forcing me into a deep easy-chair. "I have millions of things to ask you. Take off your hat and mantle. You must stay all day. Heavens! how shabby you are! I never saw anything so worn out—and yet your dress suits you, and you look nice in it." (She sighed deeply.) "Nothing suits me now. Formerly I looked well in everything. I should have looked well in rags, and people would have turned to look after me. Now, whatever I put on makes me look hideous."

"Nonsense!"

"It does—— And I am glad of it," she added, closing her lips as if she closed in some bitter joy.

"I wish you would tell me why you have come here," I inquired innocently. "I was so astonished. It was the last place I should have thought of your coming to."

"Naturally. But you see Sir Peter adores me so that he hastens to gratify my smallest wish. I expressed a desire one day to see you, and two days afterwards we were *en route*. He said I should have my wish. Sisterly love was a beautiful thing, and he felt it his duty to encourage it."

I looked at her, and could not decide whether she were in jest or earnest. If she were in jest, it was but a sorry kind of joke—if in earnest, she chose a disagreeably flippant manner of expressing herself.

"Sir Peter has great faith in annoying and thwarting me," she went on. "He has been looking better and more cheerful ever since we left Rome."

"But Adelaide——if you wished to leave Rome——"

"But I did not wish to leave Rome. I wished to stay —so we came away, you know."

The suppressed rage and hatred in her tone made me feel uncomfortable. I avoided speaking, but I could not altogether avoid looking at her. Our eyes met, and Adelaide burst into a peal of harsh laughter.

"Oh, your face, May! It is a study. I had a particular objection to coming to Elberthal, *therefore* Sir Peter instantly experienced a particular desire to come. When you are married you will understand these things. I was almost enjoying myself in Rome: I suppose Sir Peter was afraid that familiarity might bring dislike, or that if we stayed too long I might feel it dull. This is a gay, lively place, I believe—we came here, and for aught I know we are going to stay here."

She laughed again, and I sat aghast. I had been miserable about Adelaide's marriage, but I had very greatly trusted in what she had prognosticated about being able to do what she liked with him. I began now to think that there must have been some miscalculation—that she had mistaken the metal and found it not quite so ductile as she had expected. I knew enough of her to be aware that I was probably the first person to whom she had spoken in such a manner, and that not even to me would she have so spoken unless some strong feeling had prompted her to it. This made me still more uneasy. She held so fast by the fine polish of the outside of the cup and platter. Very likely the world in general supposed that she and Sir Peter were a model couple.

"I am glad you are here," she pursued. "It is a relief to have some one else than Arkwright to speak to."

"Who is Arkwright?"

"Sir Peter's secretary—a very good sort of boy. He knows all about our domestic bliss and other concerns—because he can't help. Sir Peter tells him——"

A hand on the door-handle outside. A pause ere the persons came in, for Sir Peter's voice was audible, giving directions to some one; probably the secretary of whom Adelaide had spoken. She started violently: the color fled from her face; pale dismay painted itself for a moment upon her lips, but only for a moment. In the next she was outwardly herself again. But the hand trembled which passed her handkerchief over her lips.

The door was fully opened, and Sir Peter came in.

Yes; that was the same face, the same penthouse of ragged eyebrow over the cold and snaky eye beneath, the same wolfish mouth and permanent hungry smile. But he looked better, stouter, stronger; more cheerful. It seemed as if my lady's society had done him a world of good, and acted as a kind of elixir of life.

I observed Adelaide. As he came in her eyes dropped: her hand closed tightly over the handkerchief she held, crushing it together in her grasp; she held her breath; then, recovered, she faced him.

"Heyday! Whom have we here?" he asked, in a voice which time and a residence in hearing of the language of music had not mollified. "Whom have we here? Your dressmaker, my lady? Have you had to send for a dressmaker already? Ha! what? Your *sister?* Impossible! Miss May, I am delighted to see you again! Are you very well? You look a little—a—shabby, one might almost say, my dear—a little seedy, hey?"

I had no answer ready for this winning greeting.

"Rather like my lady before she *was* my lady," he continued pleasantly, as his eyes roved over the room, over its furniture, over us.

There was power—a horrible kind of strength and vitality in that figure—a crushing impression of his potency to make one miserable, conveyed in the strong, rasping voice. Quite a different Sir Peter from my erstwhile wooer. He was a masculine, strong, planning creature, whose force of will was able to crush that of my sister as easily as her forefinger might crush a troublesome midge. He was not blind

or drivelling: he could reason, plot, argue, concoct a systematic plan for revenge, and work it out fully and in detail; he was able at once to grasp the broadest bearing and the minute details of a position, and to act upon their intimations with crushing accuracy. He was calm, decided, keen, and all in a certain small, bounded, positive way which made him all the more efficient as a ruling factor in this social sphere; where small, bounded, positive strength, without keen sympathies save in the one direction—self—and without idea of generosity, save with regard to its own merits, pays better than a higher kind of strength—better than the strength of Joan of Arc, or St. Stephen, or Christ.

This was the real Sir Peter, and before the revelation I stood aghast. And that look in Adelaide's eyes, that tone in her voice, that restrained spring in her movements, would have been rebellion, revolution, but in the act of breaking forth it became—fear. She had been outwitted —most thoroughly and completely. She had got a jailer and a prison. She feared the former, and every tradition of her life bade her remain in the latter.

Sir Peter, pleasantly exhilarated by my confusion and my lady's sullen silence, proceeded with an agreeable smile:

"Are you *never* coming downstairs, madam? I have been deprived long enough of the delights of your society. Come down! I want you to read to me."

"I am engaged, as you may see," she answered in a low voice of opposition.

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"Then the engagement must be deferred. There is a great deal of reading to do. There is the *Times* for a week."

"I hate the *Times*, and I don't understand it."

"So much the more reason why you should learn to do so. In half an hour," said Sir Peter, consulting his watch, "I shall be ready, or say in quarter of an hour."

"Absurd! I cannot be ready in quarter of an hour. Where is Mr. Arkwright?"

"What is Mr. Arkwright to you, my dear? You may be sure that Mr. Arkwright's time is not being wasted. If his mamma knew what he were doing she would be *quite* satisfied—oh, quite. In quarter of an hour."

He was leaving the room, but paused at the door with a suspicious look.

"Miss May, it is a pity for you to go away. It will do you good to see your sister, I am sure. Pray spend the day with us. Now, my lady, waste no more time."

With that he finally departed. Adelaide's face was white, but she did not address me. She rang for her maid.

"Dress my hair, Toinette, and do it as quickly as possible. Is my dress ready?" was all she said.

"*Mais oui, madame.*"

"Quick!" she repeated. "You have only a quarter of an hour."

Despite the suppressed cries, expostulations and announcements that it was impossible, Adelaide was dressed in quarter of an hour.

"You will stay, May?" said she; and I knew it was only the presence of Toinette which restrained her from urgently imploring me to stay.

I remained, though not all day: only until it was time to go and have my lesson from von Francius. During my stay, however, I had ample opportunity to observe how things were.

Sir Peter appeared to have lit upon a congenial occupation somewhat late in life, or perhaps previous practice had made him an adept in it. His time was fully occupied in carrying out a series of experiments upon his wife's pride, with a view to humble and bring it to the ground. If he did not fully succeed in that, he succeeded in making her hate him as scarcely ever was man hated before.

They had now been married some two or three months, and had foresworn all semblance of a pretence at unity or concord. She thwarted him as much as she could, and defied him as far as she dared. He played round and round his victim, springing upon her at last, with some look, or word, or hint, or smile, which meant something—I know not what—that cowed her.

Oh, it was a pleasant household!—a cheerful, amiable scene of connubial love, in which this fair woman of two and twenty found herself, with every prospect of its continuing for an indefinite number of years; for the Le Marchants were a long-lived family, and Sir Peter ailed nothing.

CHAPTER III

" Wenn Menschen aus einander gehn
So sagen sie, Auf Wiedersehn !
Auf Wiedersehn ! "

EUGEN had said, " Very soon—it may be weeks, it may be days," and had begged me not to inquire further into the matter. Seeing his anguish, I had refrained; but when two or three days had passed, and nothing was done or said, I began to hope that the parting might *not* be deferred even a few weeks; for I believed the father suffered, and with him the child, enough each *day* to wipe out years of transgression.

It was impossible to hide from Sigmund that some great grief threatened, or had already descended upon his father, and therefore upon him. The child's sympathy with the man's nature, with every mood and feeling—I had almost said his intuitive understanding of his father's very thoughts, was too keen and intense to be hoodwinked or turned aside. He did not behave like other children—of course—*versteht sich*, as Eugen said to me, with a dreary smile. He did not hang about his father's neck, imploring to hear what was the matter; he did not weep or wail, or make complaints. After that first moment of uncontrollable pain and anxiety, when he had gone into the room whose door was closed upon him, and in which Eugen had not told him all that was coming, he displayed no violent emotion; but he did what was to Eugen and me

much more heartbreaking—brooded silently; grew every day wanner and thinner, and spent long intervals in watching his father, with eyes which nothing could divert, and nothing deceive. If Eugen tried to be cheerful, to put on a little gaiety of demeanor which he did not feel in his heart, Sigmund made no answer to it, but continued to look with the same solemn, large, and mournful gaze.

His father's grief was eating into his own young heart. He asked not what it was; but both Eugen and I knew that in time, if it went on long enough, he would die of it. The picture, "Innocence Dying of a Bloodstain," which Hawthorne has suggested to us, may have its prototypes and counterparts in unsuspected places. Here was one. Nor did Sigmund, as some others, children both of larger and smaller growth, might have done, turn to me, and ask me to tell him the meaning of the sad change which had crept silently and darkly into our lives. He outspartaned the Spartan in many ways. His father had not chosen to tell him; he would die rather than ask the meaning of the silence.

One night—when some three days had passed since the letter had come—as Eugen and I sat alone, it struck me that I heard a weary turning over in the little bed in the next room, and a stifled sob coming distinctly to my ears. I lifted my head. Eugen had heard too; he was looking, with an expression of pain and indecision, towards the door.

With a vast effort—the greatest my regard for him had yet made—I took it upon myself, laid my hand on his

arm, and coercing him again into the chair, from which he had half risen, whispered:

"I will tell him. You cannot. *Nicht wahr?*"

A look was the only, but a very sufficient answer.

I went into the inner room and closed the door. A dim whiteness of moonlight struggled through the shutters, and very very faintly showed me the outline of the child—who was dear to me. Stooping down beside him, I asked if he were awake.

"*Ja, ich wache,*" he replied in a patient, resigned kind of small voice.

"Why dost thou not sleep, Sigmund? Art thou not well?"

"No, I am not well," he answered; but with an expression of double meaning. "*Mir ist nicht wohl.*"

"What ails thee?"

"If you know what ails *him*, you know what ails me."

"Do you not know yourself?" I asked.

"No," said Sigmund, with a short sob. "He says he cannot tell me."

I slipped upon my knees beside the little bed, and paused a moment. I am not ashamed to say that I prayed to something which in my mind existed outside all earthly things—perhaps to the *Freude* which Schiller sang and Beethoven composed to—for help in the hardest task of my life.

"Cannot tell me." No wonder he could not tell that soft-eyed, clinging warmth; that subtle mixture of fire and softness, spirit and gentleness—that spirit which in

the years of trouble they had passed together had grown part of his very nature—that they must part ! No wonder that the father, upon whom the child built his every idea of what was great and good, beautiful, right and true in every shape and form, could not say, " You shall not stay with me; you shall be thrust forth to strangers; and, moreover, I will not see you nor speak to you, nor shall you hear my name; and this I will do without telling you why "—that he could not say this—what had the man been who *could* have said it ?

As I kneeled in the darkness by Sigmund's little bed, and felt his pillow wet with his silent tears, and his hot cheek touching my hand, I knew it all. I believe I felt for once as a man who has begotten a child and must hurt it, repulse it, part from it, feels.

" No, my child, he cannot tell thee, because he loves thee so dearly," said I. " But I can tell thee; I have his leave to tell thee, Sigmund."

" Friedel ? "

" Thou art a very little boy, but thou art not like other boys; thy father is not just like other fathers."

" I know it."

" He is very sad."

" Yes."

" And his life which he has to live will be a sad one."

The child began to weep again. I had to pause. How was I to open my lips to instruct this baby upon the fearful, profound abyss of a subject—the evil and the sorrow that are in the world—how, how force those little tender,

bare feet, from the soft grass on to the rough uphill path all strewed with stones, and all rugged with ups and downs ? It was horribly cruel.

" Life is very sad sometimes, *mein Sigmund.*"

" Is it ? "

" Yes. Some people, too, are much sadder than others. I think thy father is one of those people. Perhaps thou art to be another."

" What my father is I will be," said he softly; and I thought that it was another and a holier version of Eugen's words to me, wrung out of the inner bitterness of his heart. " The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation, whether they deserve it or not."

The child, who knew nothing of the ancient saying, merely said with love and satisfaction swelling his voice to fulness, " What my father is I will be."

" Couldst thou give up something very dear for his sake ? "

" What a queer question ! " said Sigmund. " I want nothing when I am with him."

" *Ei, mein Kind !* Thou dost not know what I mean. What is the greatest joy of thy life ? To be near thy father and see him, hear his voice, and touch him, and feel him near thee ; *nicht wahr ?* "

" Yes," said he in a scarcely audible whisper.

There was a pause, during which I was racking my brains to think of some way of introducing the rest without shocking him too much, when suddenly he said, in a clear, low voice :

"That is it. He would never let me leave him, and he would never leave me."

Silence again for a few moments, which seemed to deepen some sneaking shadow in the boy's mind, for he repeated through clenched teeth, and in a voice which fought hard against conviction, "Never, never, never!"

"Sigmund—never of his own will. But remember what I said, that he is sad, and there is something in his life which makes him not only unable to do what he likes, but *obliged* to do exactly what he does not like—what he most hates and fears—to—to part from thee."

"*Nein, nein, nein!*" said he. "Who can make him do anything he does not wish? Who can take me away from him?"

"I do not know. I only know that it must be so. There is no escaping from it, and no getting out of it. It is horrible, but it is so. Sometimes, Sigmund, there are things in the world like this."

"The world must be a very cruel place," he said, as if first struck with that fact.

"Now dost thou understand, Sigmund, why he did not speak? Couldst thou have told *him* such a thing?"

"Where is he?"

"There, in the next room, and very sad for thee."

Sigmund, before I knew what he was thinking of, was out of bed and had opened the door. I saw that Eugen looked up, saw the child standing in the doorway, sprang up, and Sigmund bounded to meet him. A cry as of a great terror came from the child. Self-restraint, so long

maintained, broke down; he cried in a loud, frightened voice:

"Papa, Friedel says I must leave thee!" and burst into a storm of sobs and crying such as I had never before known him yield to.

Eugen folded him in his arms, laid his head upon his breast, and clasping him very closely to him, paced about the room with him in silence, until the first fit of grief was over. I, from the dark room, watched them in a kind of languor, for I was weary, as though I had gone through some physical struggle.

They passed to and fro, like some moving dream. Bit by bit the child learned from his father's lips the pitiless truth, down to the last bitter drop: that the parting was to be complete, and they were not to see each other.

"But never, never?" asked Sigmund in a voice of terror and pain mingled.

"When thou art a man that will depend upon thyself," said Eugen. "Thou wilt have to choose."

"Choose what?"

"Whether thou wilt see me again."

"When I am a man *may* I choose?" he asked, raising his head with sudden animation.

"Yes; I shall see to that."

"Oh, very well. I have chosen now," said Sigmund, and the thought gave him visible joy and relief.

Eugen kissed him passionately. Blessed ignorance of the hardening influences of the coming years! Blessed tenderness of heart and singleness of affection which could

see no possibility that circumstances might make the acquaintance of a now loved and adored superior being appear undesirable! And blessed sanguineness of five years old, which could bridge the gulf between then and manhood, and cry, *Auf Wiedersehen!*

* * * * *

During the next few days more letters were exchanged. Eugen received one which he answered. Part of the answer he showed to me, and it ran thus:

"I consent to this, but only upon one condition, which is that when my son is eighteen years old, you tell him all, and give him his choice whether he see me again or not. My word is given not to interfere in the matter, and I can trust yours when you promise that it shall be as I stipulate. I want your answer upon this point, which is very simple, and the single condition I make. It is, however, one which I cannot and will not waive."

"Thirteen years, Eugen," said I.

"Yes; in thirteen years I shall be forty-three."

"You will let me know what the answer to that is?" I went on.

He nodded. By return of post the answer came.

"It is 'yes,'" said he, and paused. "The day after to-morrow he is to go."

"Not alone, surely?"

"No; some one will come for him."

I heard some of the instructions he gave his boy.

"There is one man where you are going, whom I wish you to obey as you would me, Sigmund," he told him.

"Is he like thee?"

"No; much better and wiser than I am. But, remember, he never commands twice. Thou must not question and delay as thou dost with thy weak-minded old father. He is the master in the place thou art going to."

"Is it far from here?"

"Not exceedingly far."

"Hast thou been there?"

"Oh yes," said Eugen in a peculiar tone, "often."

"What must I call this man?" inquired Sigmund.

"He will tell thee that. Do thou obey him and endeavor to do what he wishes, and so thou mayst know thou art best pleasing me."

"And when I am a man I can choose to see thee again. But where wilt thou be?"

"When the time comes thou wilt soon find me if it is necessary—— And thy music," pursued Eugen. "Remember that in all troubles that may come to thee, and whatever thou mayst pass through, there is one great, beautiful goddess who abides above the troubles of men, and is often most beautiful in the hearts that are most troubled. Remember—whom?"

"Beethoven," was the prompt rely.

"Just so. And hold fast to the service of the goddess Music, the most beautiful thing in the world."

"And thou art a musician," said Sigmund, with a little laugh, as if it "understood itself" that his father should naturally be a priest of "the most beautiful thing in the world."

I hurry over that short time before the parting came. Eugen said to me:

"They are sending for him—an old servant. I am not afraid to trust him with him."

And one morning he came—the old servant. Sigmund happened at the moment not to be in the sitting-room; Eugen and I were. There was a knock, and in answer to our *Herein!* there entered an elderly man of soldierly appearance, with a grizzled moustache, and stiff, military bearing; he was dressed in a very plain, but very handsome livery, and on entering the room and seeing Eugen, he paused just within the door, and saluted with a look of deep respect; nor did he attempt to advance further. Eugen had turned very pale.

It struck me that he might have something to say to this messenger of fate, and with some words to that effect I rose to leave them together. Eugen laid his hand upon my arm.

"Sit still, Friedhelm." And turning to the man, he added: "How were all when you left, Heinrich?"

"Well, Herr Gr——"

"Courvoisier."

"All were well, *mein Herr*."

"Wait a short time," said he.

A silent inclination on the part of the man. Eugen went into the inner room where Sigmund was, and closed the door. There was silence. How long did it endure? What was passing there? What throes of parting? What grief not to be spoken or described?

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Meanwhile the elderly man-servant remained in his sentinel attitude, and with fixed expressionless countenance, within the doorway. Was the time long to him, or short ?

At last the door opened, and Sigmund came out alone. God help us all ! It is terrible to see such an expression upon a child's soft face. White and set and worn as if with years of suffering was the beautiful little face. The elderly man started, surprised from his impassiveness, as the child came into the room. An irrepressible flash of emotion crossed his face; he made a step forward. Sigmund seemed as if he did not see us. He was making a mechanical way to the door, when I interrupted him.

" Sigmund, do not forget thy old Friedhelm ! " I cried, clasping him in my arms, and kissing his little pale face, thinking of the day, three years ago, when his father had brought him wrapped up in a plaid on that wet afternoon, and my heart had gone out to him.

" *Lieber* Friedhelm ! " he said, returning my embrace. " Love my father when I—am gone. And—*auf—auf Wiedersehen !* "

He loosed his arms from round my neck and went up to the man, saying :

" I am ready. "

The large horny hand clasped round the small delicate one. The servant-man turned, and with a stiff, respectful bow to me, led Sigmund from the room. The door closed after him—he was gone. The light of two lonely lives was put out. Was our darling right or wrong in that persistent *auf Wiedersehen* of his ?

CHAPTER IV

"Resignation! Welch' elendes Hülfsmittel! und doch bleibt es mir das einzig Uebrige."—*Briefe* BEETHOVEN'S.

SEVERAL small events which took place at this time had all their indirect but strong bearing on the histories of the characters in this veracious narrative. The great concert of the *Passionsmusik* of Bach came off on the very evening of Sigmund's departure. It was, I confess, with some fear and trembling that I went to call Eugen to his duties, for he had not issued from his own room since he had gone into it to send Sigmund away.

He raised his face as I came in; he was sitting looking out of the window, and told me afterwards that he had sat there, he believed, ever since he had been unable to catch another glimpse of the carriage which bore his darling away from him.

"What is it, Friedel?" he asked, when I came in.

I suggested in a subdued tone that the concert began in half an hour.

"Ah, true!" said he, rising; "I must get ready. Let me see, what is it?"

"The *Passionsmusik*."

"To be sure! Most appropriate music! I feel as if I could write a Passion Music myself just now."

We had but to cross the road from our dwelling to the Concert-room. As we entered the corridor two ladies also stepped into it, from a very grand carriage. They were

accompanied by a young man, who stood a little to one side to let them pass; and as they came up and we came up, von Francius came up too.

One of the ladies was May Wedderburn, who was dressed in black, and looked exquisitely lovely, to my eyes, and, I felt, to some others, with her warm auburn hair in shining coils upon her head. The other was a woman in whose pale, magnificent face I traced some likeness to our fair singer, but she was different; colder, grander, more severe.

It so happened that the ladies barred the way as we arrived, and we had to stand by for a few moments as von Francius shook hands with Miss Wedderburn, and asked her smilingly if she were in good voice.

She answered, in the prettiest broken German I ever heard, and then turned to the lady, saying:

"Adelaide, may I introduce Herr von Francius—Lady Le Marchant."

A stately bow from the lady—a deep reverence, with a momentary glance of an admiration warmer than I had ever seen in his eyes, on the part of von Francius—a glance which was instantly suppressed to one of conventional inexpressiveness. I was pleased and interested with this little peep at a rank which I had never seen, and could have stood watching them for a long time: the splendid beauty and the great pride of bearing of the English lady were a revelation to me; and opened quite a large, unknown world before my mental eyes. Romances and poems, and men dying of love, or killing each other for it, no longer seemed ridiculous; for a smile or a warmer

glance from that icily beautiful face must be something not to forget.

It was Eugen who pushed forward, with a frown on his brow, and less than his usual courtesy. I saw his eyes and Miss Wedderburn's meet; I saw the sudden flush that ran over her fair face; the stern composure of his. He would own nothing; but I was strangely mistaken if he could say that it was merely because he had nothing to own.

The concert was a success, so far as Miss Wedderburn went. If von Francius had allowed repetitions, one song at least would have been encored. As it was, she was a success. And von Francius spent his time in the pauses with her and her sister: in a grave, sedate way he and the English lady seemed to "get on."

The concert was over. The next thing that was of any importance to us occurred shortly afterwards. Von Francius had long been somewhat unpopular with his men, and at silent enmity with Eugen, who was, on the contrary, a universal favorite. There came a crisis, and the men sent a deputation to Eugen to say that if he would accept the post of leader they would strike, and refuse to accept any other than he.

This was an opportunity for distinguishing himself. He declined the honor: his words were few: he said something about how kind we had all been to him, "from the time when I arrived; when Friedhelm Helfen, here, took me in, gave me every help and assistance in his power, and showed how appropriate his name was;* and so began

* *Helfen*—to help.

a friendship which, please heaven, shall last till death divides us, and perhaps go on afterwards." He ended by saying some words which made a deep impression upon me. After saying that he might possibly leave Elberthal he added, "Lastly, I cannot be your leader because I never intend to be any one's leader—more than I am now," he added, with a faint smile. "A kind of deputy, you know. I am not fit to be a leader. I have no gift in that line——"

"*Doch!*" from half-a-dozen around.

"None whatever. I intend to remain in my present condition—no lower if I can help it, but certainly no higher. I have good reasons for knowing it to be my duty to do so."

And then he urged them so strongly to stand by Herr von Francius that we were quite astonished. He told them that von Francius would sometime rank with Schumann, Raff, or Rubinstein, and that the men who rejected him now would then be pointed out as ignorant and prejudiced.

And amid the silence that ensued, he began to direct us —we had a *Probe* to Liszt's *Prometheus*, I remember.

He had won the day for von Francius, and von Francius, getting to hear of it, came one day to see him, and frankly apologized for his prejudice in the past, and asked Eugen for his friendship in the future. Eugen's answer puzzled me.

"I am glad you know that I honor your genius and wish you well," said he, "and your offer of friendship honors

me. Suppose I say I accept it—until you see cause to withdraw it."

"You are putting rather a remote contingency to the front," said von Francius.

"Perhaps—perhaps not," said Eugen, with a singular smile. "At least I am glad to have had this token of your sense of generosity. We are on different paths, and my friends are not on the same level as yours——"

"Excuse me: every true artist must be a friend of every other true artist. We recognize no division of rank or possession."

Eugen bowed, still smiling ambiguously, nor could von Francius prevail upon him to say anything nearer or more certain. They parted, and long afterwards I learnt the truth, and knew the bitterness which must have been in Eugen's heart: the shame, the gloom; the downcast sorrow, as he refused indirectly but decidedly the thing he would have liked so well—to shake the hand of a man high in position and honorable in name—look him in the face and say, "I accept your friendship—nor need you be ashamed of wearing mine openly."

He refused the advance: he refused that and every other opening for advancement. The man seemed to have a horror of advancement, or of coming in any way forward. He rejected even certain offers which were made that he should perform some solos at different concerts in Elberthal and the neighborhood. I once urged him to become rich and have Sigmund back again. He said: "If I had all the wealth in Germany it would divide us farther still."

I have said nothing about the blank which Sigmund's absence made in our lives, simply because it was too great a blank to describe. Day after day we felt it, and it grew keener, and the wound smarted more sharply. One cannot work all day long, and in our leisure hours we learnt to know only too well that he was gone—and gone indeed. That which remained to us was the "Resignation," the "miserable assistant" which poor Beethoven indicated with such a bitter smile. We took it to us as inmate and *Hausfreund*, and made what we could of it.



CHAPTER V

"So runs the world away."

KÖNIGSALLÉE, No. 3, could scarcely be called a happy establishment. I saw much of its inner life, and what I saw made me feel mortally sad—envy, hatred, and malice; no hour of satisfaction; my sister's bitter laughs and sneers, and gibes at men and things; Sir Peter's calm consciousness of his power, and his no less calm, crushing, unvarying manner of wielding it—of silently and horribly making it felt. Adelaide's very nature appeared to have changed. From a lofty indifference to most things, to sorrow and joy, to the hopes, fears, and feelings of others, she had become eager, earnest, passionate, resenting ill-usage, strenuously desiring her own way, deeply angry when she could not get it. To say that Sir Peter's influence upon her was merely productive of a negative dislike would be ridiculous. It was productive of an intense, active hatred, a hatred which would gladly, if it could, have vented itself in deeds. That being impossible, it showed itself in a haughty, unbroken indifference of demeanor which it seemed to be Sir Peter's present aim in some way to break down, for not only did she hate him—he hated her.

She used to the utmost what liberty she had. She was not a woman to talk of regret for what she had done, or to own that she had miscalculated her game. Her life was a great failure, and that failure had been brought home to

her mind in a mercilessly short space of time; but of what use to bewail it? She was not yet conquered. The bitterness of spirit which she carried about with her took the form of a scoffing pessimism. A hard laugh at the things which made other people shake their heads and uplift their hands; a ready scoff at all tenderness; a sneer at anything which could by any stretch of imagination be called good; a determined running up of what was hard, sordid, and worldly, and a persistent and utter scepticism as to the existence of the reverse of those things; such was now the yea, yea, and nay, nay, of her communication.

To a certain extent she had what she had sold herself for; outside pomp and show in plenty—carriages, horses, servants, jewels, and clothes. Sir Peter liked, to use his own expression, "to see my lady blaze away"—only she must blaze away in his fashion, not hers. He declared he did not know how long he might remain in Elberthal; spoke vaguely of "business at home," about which he was waiting to hear, and said that until he heard the news he wanted, he could not move from the place he was in. He was in excellent spirits at seeing his wife chafing under the confinement to a place she detested, and appeared to find life sweet.

Meanwhile she, using her liberty as I said to the utmost extent, had soon plunged into the midst of the fastest set in Elberthal.

There was a fast set there as there was a musical set, an artistic set, a religious set, a free-thinking set; for though it was not so large or so rich as many dull, wealthy towns

in England, it presented from its mixed inhabitants various phases of society.

This set into which Adelaide had thrown herself was the fast one; a coterie of officers, artists, the richer merchants and bankers, medical men, literati, and the young (and sometimes old) wives, sisters, and daughters of the same; many of them priding themselves upon not being natives of Elberthal, but coming from larger and gayer towns—Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and others.

They led a gay enough life amongst themselves—a life of theatre, concert, and opera-going, of dances, private at home, public at the Malkasten or Artists' Club, flirtations, marriages, engagements, disappointments, the usual dreary and monotonous round. They considered themselves the only society worthy the name in Elberthal, and whoever was not of their set was *Niemand*.

I was partly dragged, partly I went to a certain extent of my own will, into this vortex. I felt myself to have earned a larger experience now of life and life's realities. I questioned when I should once have discreetly inclined the head and held my peace. I had a mind to examine this clique and the characters of some of its units, and see in what it was superior to some other acquaintances (in a humbler sphere) with whom my lot had been cast. As time went on I found the points of superiority to decrease —those of inferiority rapidly to increase.

I troubled myself little about them and their opinions. My joys and griefs, hopes and fears, lay so entirely outside their circle that I scarce noticed whether they noticed me

or not. I felt and behaved coldly towards them; to the women because their voices never had the ring of genuine liking in speaking to me; to the men because I found them as a rule shallow, ignorant, and pretentious; repellent to me, as I dare say I, with my inability to understand them, was to them. I saw most men and things through a distorting glass; that of contrast, conscious or unconscious, with Courvoisier.

My musician, I reasoned, wrongly or rightly, had three times their wit, three times their good looks, manners and information, and many times three times their common sense, as well as a juster appreciation of his own merits: besides which, my musician was not a person whose acquaintance and esteem were to be had for the asking—or even for a great deal more than the asking, while it seemed that these young gentlemen gave their society to any one who could live in a certain style and talk a certain *argot*, and their esteem to every one who could give them often enough the savory meat that their souls loved, and the wine of a certain quality which made glad their hearts, and rendered them of a cheerful countenance.

But my chief reason for mixing with people who were certainly as a rule utterly distasteful and repugnant to me, was because I could not bear to leave Adelaide alone. I pitied her in her lonely alienated misery; and I knew that it was some small solace to her to have me with her.

The tale of one day will give an approximate idea of most of the days I spent with her. I was at the time staying with her. Our hours were late. Breakfast was not

over till ten, that is by Adelaide and myself. Sir Peter was an exceedingly active person, both in mind and body, who saw after the management of his affairs in England in the minutest manner that absence would allow. Towards half-past eleven he strolled into the room in which we were sitting, and asked what we were doing.

"Looking over costumes," said I, as Adelaide made no answer, and I raised my eyes from some colored illustrations.

"Costumes—what kind of costumes?"

"Costumes for the Maskenball," I answered, taking refuge in brevity of reply.

"Oh!" He paused. Then, turning suddenly to Adelaide:

"And what is this entertainment, my lady?"

"The Carnival Ball," said she almost inaudibly, between her closed lips, as she shut the book of illustrations, pushed it away from her, and leaned back in her chair.

"And you think you would like to go to the Carnival Ball, hey?"

"No, I do not," said she, as she stroked her lapdog with a long white hand on which glittered many rings, and steadily avoiding looking at him. She did wish to go to the ball, but she knew that it was as likely as not that if she displayed any such desire he would prevent it. Despite her curt reply she foresaw impending the occurrence which she most of anything disliked—a conversation with Sir Peter. He placed himself in our midst, and requested to look at the pictures. In silence I handed him the book.

I never could force myself to smile when he was there, nor overcome a certain restraint of demeanor which rather pleased and flattered him than otherwise. He glanced sharply round in the silence which followed his joining our company, and turning over the illustrations, said:

"I thought I heard some noise when I came in. Don't let me interrupt the conversation."

But the conversation was more than interrupted; it was dead—the life frozen out of it by his very appearance.

"When is the Carnival, and when does this piece of tomfoolery come off?" he inquired, with winning grace of diction.

"The Carnival begins this year on the 26th of February. The ball is on the 27th," said I, confining myself to facts and figures.

"And how do you get there? By paying?"

"Well, you have to pay—yes. But you must get your tickets from some member of the *Malkasten* Club. It is the artists' ball, and they arrange it all."

"H'm! Ha! And as what do you think of going, Adelaide?" he inquired, turning with suddenness towards her.

"I tell you I have not thought of going—nor thought anything about it. Herr von Francius sent us the pictures, and we were looking over them. That is all."

Sir Peter turned over the pages and looked at the commonplace costumes therein suggested—Joan of Arc, Cleopatra, Picardy Peasant, Maria Stuart, a Snow Queen, and all the rest of them.

"Well, I don't see anything here that I would wear if I were a woman," he said, as he closed the book. "February, did you say?"

"Yes," said I, as no one else spoke.

"Well, it is the middle of January now. You had better be looking out for something; but don't let it be anything in those —— books. Let the beggarly daubers see how Englishwomen do these things."

"Do you intend me to understand that you wish us to go to the ball?" inquired Adelaide in an icy kind of voice.

"Yes, I do," almost shouted Sir Peter. Adelaide could, despite the whip and rein with which he held her, exasperate and irritate him—by no means more thoroughly than by pretending that she did not understand his grandiloquent allusions, and the vague grandness of the commands which he sometimes gave. "I mean you to go, and your little sister here, and Arkwright too. I don't know about myself. Now, I am going to ride. Good-morning."

As Sir Peter went out, von Francius came in. Sir Peter greeted him with a grin, and exaggerated expressions of affability at which von Francius looked silently scornful. Sir Peter added:

"These two ladies are puzzled to know what they shall wear at the Carnival Ball. Perhaps you can give them your assistance."

Then he went away. It was as if a half-muzzled wolf had left the room.

Von Francius had come to give me my lesson, which was

now generally taken at my sister's house and in her presence, and after which von Francius usually remained some half-hour or so in conversation with one or both of us. He had become an *intime* of the house. I was glad of this, and that without him nothing seemed complete, no party rounded, scarcely an evening finished.

When he was not with us in the evening, we were somewhere where he was; either at a concert or a *Probe*, or at the theatre or opera, or one of the fashionable lectures which were then in season.

It could hardly be said that von Francius was a more frequent visitor than some other men at the house, but from the first his attitude with regard to Adelaide had been different. Some of those other men were, or professed to be, desperately in love with the beautiful Englishwoman; there was always a half-gallantry in their behavior, a homage which might not be very earnest, but which was homage all the same, to a beautiful woman. With von Francius it had never been thus, but there had been a gravity and depth about their intercourse which pleased me. I had never had the least apprehension with regard to those other people; she might amuse herself with them; it would only be amusement, and some contempt.

But von Francius was a man of another mettle. It had struck me almost from the first that there might be some danger, and I was unfeignedly thankful to see that as time went on, and his visits grew more and more frequent, and the intimacy deeper, not a look, not a sign occurred to hint that it ever was or would be more than acquaintance,

liking, appreciation, friendship, in successive stages. Von Francius had never from the first treated her as an ordinary person, but with a kind of tacit understanding that something not to be spoken of lay behind all she did and said; with the consciousness that the skeleton in Adelaide's cupboard was more ghastly to look upon than most people's secret spectres, and that it persisted, with an intrusiveness and want of breeding peculiar to guests of that calibre, in thrusting its society upon her at all kinds of inconvenient times.

I enjoyed those music lessons, I must confess. Von Francius had begun to teach me music now, as well as singing. By this time I had resigned myself to the conviction that such talent as I might have lay in my voice, not my fingers, and accepted it as part of the conditions which ordain that in every human life shall be something *manqué*, something incomplete.

The most memorable moments with me have been those in which pain and pleasure, yearning and satisfaction, knowledge and seeking, have been so exquisitely and so intangibly blended, in listening to some deep sonata, some stately and pathetic old *Ciaconna* or Gavotte, some Concerto or Symphony: the thing nearest heaven is to sit apart with closed eyes while the orchestra or the individual performer interprets for one the mystic poetry, or the dramatic fire, or the subtle cobweb refinements of some instrumental poem.

I would rather have composed a certain little *Träumerei* of Schumann's, or a *Barcarole* of Rubinstein's, or a Sonata

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of Schubert's, than have won all the laurels of Grisi, all the glory of Malibran and Jenny Lind.

But it was not to be. I told myself so, and yet I tried so hard in my halting, bungling way to worship the goddess of my idolatry, that my master had to restrain me.

"Stop!" said he this morning, when I had been weakly endeavoring to render a *Ciaconna* from a *Suite* of Lachner's which had moved me to thoughts too deep for tears at the last Symphonie Concert. "Stop, Fräulein May! Duty first: your voice before your fingers."

"Let me try once again!" I implored.

He shut up the music and took it from the desk.

"*Entbehren sollst du; sollst entbehren!*" said he dryly.

I took my lesson and then practised shakes for an hour, while he talked to Adelaide; and then, she being summoned to visitors, he went away.

Later I found Adelaide in the midst of a lot of visitors —Herr Hauptmann This, Herr Lieutenant That, Herr Maler The Other, Herr Concertmeister So-and-So—for von Francius was not the only musician who followed in her train; but there I am wrong. He did not follow in her train; he might stand aside and watch the others who did; but following was not in his line.

There were ladies there too—gay young women, who rallied round Lady Le Marchant as around a master-spirit in the art of *Zeitvertreib*.

This levée lasted till the bell rang for lunch, when we went into the dining-room, and found Sir Peter and his

secretary, young Arkwright, already seated. He—Arkwright—was a good-natured, tender-hearted lad, devoted to Adelaide. I do not think he was very happy or very well satisfied with his place, but from his salary he half supported a mother and sister, and so was fain to "grin and bear it."

Sir Peter was always exceedingly affectionate to me. I hated to be in the same room with him, and while I detested him, was also conscious of an unheroic fear of him. For Adelaide's sake I was as attentive to him as I could make myself, in order to free her a little from his surveillance, for poor Adelaide Wedderburn, with her few pounds of annual pocket-money, and her proud, restless, ambitious spirit, had been a free, contented woman in comparison with Lady Le Marchant.

On the day in question he was particularly amiable, called me "my dear" every time he spoke to me, and complimented me upon my good looks, telling me I was growing monstrous handsome—ay, devilish handsome, by Gad! far outstripping my lady, who had gone off dreadfully in her good looks, hadn't she, Arkwright?

Poor Arkwright, tingling with a scorching blush, and ready to sink through the floor with confusion, stammered out that he had never thought of venturing to remark upon my Lady Le Marchant's looks.

"What a lie, Arkwright! You know you watch her as if she was the apple of your eye," chuckled Sir Peter, smiling round upon the company with his cold glittering eyes. "What are you blushing so for, my pretty May?

Isn't there a song something about my pretty May, my dearest May, eh ?"

"*My pretty Jane*, I suppose you mean," said I, nobly taking his attention upon myself, while Adelaide sat motionless and white as marble, and Arkwright cooled down somewhat from his state of shame and anguish at being called upon to decide which of us eclipsed the other in good looks.

"Pretty Jane! Who ever heard of a pretty Jane ?" said Sir Peter. "If it isn't May, it ought to be. At any rate, there was a Charming May."

"The month—not a person."

"Pretty Jane, indeed! You must sing me that after lunch, and then we can see whether the song was pretty or not, my dear, eh ?"

"Certainly, Sir Peter, if you like."

"Yes, I do like. My lady here seems to have lost her voice lately. I can't imagine the reason. I am sure she has everything to make her sing for joy; have you not, my dear ?"

"Everything, and more than everything," replies my lady laconically.

"And she has a strong sense of duty, too; loves those whom she ought to love, and despises those whom she ought to despise. She always has done, from her infancy up to the time when she loved me and despised public opinion for my sake."

The last remark was uttered in tones of deeper malignity, while the eyes began to glare, and the under-lip to

droop, and the sharp eye-teeth, which lent such a very emphatic point to all Sir Peter's smiles, sneers, and facial movements in general, gleamed.

Adelaide's lip quivered for a second; her color momentarily faded.

In this kind of light and agreeable badinage the meal passed over, and we were followed to the drawing-room by Sir Peter, loudly demanding "'My Pretty Jane'—or May, or whatever it was."

"We are going out," said my lady. "You can have it another time. May cannot sing the moment she has finished lunch."

"Hold your tongue, my dear," said Sir Peter; and inspired by an agreeable and playful humor, he patted his wife's shoulder and pinched her ear.

The color fled from her very lips, and she stood pale and rigid, with a look in her eyes which I interpreted to mean a shuddering recoil, stopped by sheer force of will.

Sir Peter turned with an engaging laugh to me:

"Miss May—bonnie May—made me a promise, and she must keep it; or if she doesn't, I shall take the usual forfeit. We know what that is. Upon my word, I almost wish she would break her promise."

"I have no wish to break my promise," said I, hastening to the piano, and then there singing "My Pretty Jane," and one or two others, after which he released us, chuckling at having contrived to keep my lady so long waiting for her drive.

The afternoon's programme was, I confess, not without

attraction to me; for I knew that I was pretty, and I had not one of the strong and powerful minds which remain unelated by admiration, and undepressed by the absence of it.

We drove to the picture exhibitions, and at both of them had a little crowd attending us. That crowd consisted chiefly of admirers, or professed admirers, of my sister, with von Francius in addition, who dropped in at the first exhibition.

Von Francius did not attend my sister; it was by my side that he remained, and it was to me that he talked. He looked on at the men who were around her, but scarcely addressed her himself.

There was a clique of young artists who chose to consider the wealth of Sir Peter Le Marchant as fabulous, and who paid court to his wife from mixed motives; the prevailing one being a hope that she would be smitten by some picture of theirs at a fancy price, and order it to be sent home —as if she ever saw with anything beyond the most superficial outward eye those pictures, and as if it lay in her power to order any one, even the smallest and meanest of them. These ingenuous artists had yet to learn that Sir Peter's picture purchases were formed from his own judgment, through the medium of himself or his secretary, armed with strict injunctions as to price, and upon the most purely practical and business-like principles—not in the least at the caprice of his wife.

We went to the larger gallery last. As we entered it I turned aside with von Francius to look at a picture in a

small back room, and when we turned to follow the others, they had all gone forward into the large room; but standing at the door by which we had entered, and looking calmly after us, was Courvoisier.

A shock thrilled me. It was some time since I had seen him; for I had scarcely been at my lodgings for a fortnight, and we had had no *Hauptproben* lately. I had heard some rumor that important things—or, as Frau Lützler gracefully expressed it, *was Wichtiges*—had taken place between von Francius and the Kapelle, and that Courvoisier had taken a leading part in the affair. To-day the greeting between the two men was a cordial, if a brief one.

Eugen's eyes scarcely fell upon me; he included me in his bow—that was all. All my little day-dream of growing self-complacency was shattered, scattered; the old feeling of soreness, smallness, wounded pride, and bruised self-esteem came back again. I felt a wild, angry desire to *compel* some other glance from those eyes than that exasperating one of quiet indifference. I felt it like a lash every time I encountered it. Its very coolness and absence of emotion stung me and made me quiver.

We and Courvoisier entered the large room at the same time. While Adelaide was languidly making its circuit, von Francius and I sat down upon the ottoman in the middle of the room. I watched Eugen, even if he took no notice of me—watched him till every feeling of rest, every hard-won conviction of indifference to him, and feeling of regard conquered, came tumbling down in ignominious ruins. I knew he had had a fiery trial. His child, for

whom I used to watch his adoration with a dull kind of envy, had left him. There was some mystery about it, and much pain. Frau Lützler had begun to tell me a long story culled from one told her by Frau Schmidt, and I had stopped her, but knew that " Herr Courvoisier was not like the same man any more."

That trouble was visible in firmly-marked lines, even now: he looked subdued, older, and his face was thin and worn. Yet never had I noticed so plainly before the bright light of intellect in his eye; the noble stamp of mind upon his brow. There was more than the grace of a kindly nature in the pleasant curve of the lips—there was thought, power, intellectual strength. I compared him with the young men who were at this moment dangling round my sister. Not one amongst them could approach him—not merely in stature and breadth and the natural grace and dignity of carriage, but in far better things—in the mind that dominates sense: the will that holds back passion with a hand as strong and firm as that of a master over the dog whom he chooses to obey him.

This man—I write from knowledge—had the capacity to appreciate and enjoy life—to taste its pleasures—never to excess, but with no ascetic's lips. But the natural prompting—the moral " eat, drink and be merry," was held back with a ruthless hand; with chain of iron, and biting thong to chastise pitilessly each restive movement. He dreed out his weird most thoroughly, and drank the cup presented to him to the last dregs.

When the weird is very long and hard—when the flavor

of the cup is exceeding bitter, this process leaves its effects in the form of sobered mien, gathering wrinkles, and a permanent shadow on the brow, and in the eyes. So it was with him.

He went round the room, looking at a picture here and there with the eye of a connoisseur—then pausing before the one which von Francius had brought me to look at on Christmas-day, Courvoisier, folding his arms, stood before it and surveyed it, straitly, and without moving a muscle: coolly, criticisingly and very fastidiously. The blasé-looking individual in the foreground received, I saw, a share of his attention—the artist, too, in the background; the model, with the white dress, oriental fan, bare arms, and half-bored, half-cynic look. He looked at them all long—attentively—then turned away; the only token of approval or disapproval which he vouchsafed being a slight smile and a slight shrug, both so very slight as to be almost imperceptible. Then he passed on—glanced at some other pictures—at my sister, on whom his eyes dwelt for a moment as if he thought that she at least made a very beautiful picture; then out of the room.

"Do you know him?" said von Francius, quite softly, to me.

I started violently. I had utterly forgotten that he was at my side, and I know not what tales my face had been telling. I turned to find the dark and impenetrable eyes of von Francius fixed on me.

"A little," I said.

"Then you know a generous, high-minded man—a man

who has made me feel ashamed of myself—and a man to whom I made an apology the other day with pleasure."

My heart warmed. This praise of Eugen by a man whom I admired so devotedly as I did Max von Francius seemed to put me right with myself and the world.

Soon afterwards we left the exhibition, and while the others went away it appeared somehow by the merest casualty that von Francius was asked to drive back with us and have afternoon tea, *in englischer Weise*—which he did, after a moment's hesitation.

After tea he left for an orchestra Probe to the next Saturday's concert; but with an *Auf Wiedersehen*, for the Probe will not last long, and we shall meet again at the opera and later at the Malkasten Ball.

I enjoyed going to the theatre. I knew my dress was pretty. I knew that I looked nice, and that people would look at me, and that I, too, should have my share of admiration and compliments as a *schöne Engländerin*.

We are twenty minutes late—naturally. All the people in the place stare at us and whisper about us, partly because we have a conspicuous place; the proscenium Loge to the right of the stage, partly because we are in full toilette —an almost unprecedented circumstance in that homely theatre—partly, I suppose, because Adelaide is supremely beautiful.

Mr. Arkwright was already with us. Von Francius joined us after the first act, and remained until the end. Almost the only words he exchanged with Adelaide were:

"Have you seen this opera before, Lady Le Marchant?"

"No; never."

It was Auber's merry little opera, *Des Teufels Antheil.* The play was played. Von Francius was beside me. Whenever I looked down I saw Eugen, with the same calm, placid indifference upon his face; and again I felt the old sensation of soreness, shame and humiliation. I feel wrought up to a great pitch of nervous excitement when we leave the theatre and drive to the Malkasten, where there is more music—dance music; and where the ball is at its height. And in a few moments I find myself whirling down the room in the arms of von Francius, to the music of *Mein schönster Tag in Baden*, and wishing very earnestly that the heart-sickness I feel would make me ill or faint, or anything that would send me home to quietness and—him. But it does not have the desired effect. I am in a fever: I am all too vividly conscious, and people tell me how well I am looking, and that rosy cheeks become me better than pale ones.

They are merry parties, these dances at the Malkasten, in the quaintly-decorated saal of the artists' club-house. There is a certain license in the dress. Velvet coats, and coats, too, in many colors, green and prune and claret, vying with black, are not "tabu." There are various uniforms of Hussars, Infantry, and Uhlans, and some of the women, too, are dressed in a certain fantastically picturesque style to please their artist brothers or fiancés.

The dancing gets faster, and the festivities are kept up

late. Songs are sung which perhaps would not be heard in a quiet drawing-room; a little acting is done with them. Music is played, and von Francius, in a vagrant mood, sits down and improvises a fitful, stormy kind of fantasia, which in itself and in his playing puts me much in mind of the weird performances of the Abbé Liszt.

I at least hear another note than of yore, another touch. The soul that it wanted seems gradually creeping into it. He tells a strange story upon the quivering keys—it is becoming tragic, sad, and pathetic. He says hastily to me and in an undertone, "Fräulein May, this is a thought of one of your own poets:

> "'How sad, and mad, and bad it was,
> And yet how it was sweet.'"

I am almost in tears, and every face is affording illustrations for "The Expressions of the Emotions in Men and Women," when suddenly it breaks off with a loud Ha! ha! ha! which sounds as if it came from a human voice, and jars upon me, and then he breaks into a waltz, pushing the astonished musicians aside, and telling the company to dance while he pipes.

A mad dance to a mad tune. He plays and plays on, ever faster, and ever a wilder measure, with strange, eerie, clanging chords in it which are not like dance notes, until Adelaide prepares to go, and then he suddenly ceases, springs up, and comes with us to our carriage. Adelaide looks white and worn.

Again at the carriage door, "a pair of words" passes between them.

"Milady is tired?" from him, in a courteous tone, as his dark eyes dwell upon her face.

"Thanks, Herr Direktor, I am generally tired," from her, with a slight smile, as she folds her shawl across her breast with one hand, and extends the other to him.

"Milady, adieu."

"Adieu, Herr von Francius."

The ball is over, and I think we have all had enough of it.



CHAPTER VI

The Carnival Ball

"AREN'T you coming to the ball, Eugen?"

"I? No."

"I would if I were you."

"But you are yourself, you see, and I am I. What was it that Heinrich Mohr in 'The Children of the World' was always saying? *Ich bin ich, und setze mich selbst.* Ditto me, that's all."

"It is no end of a lark," I pursued.

"My larking days are over."

"And you can talk to any one you like."

"I am going to talk to myself, thanks. I have long wanted a little conversation with that interesting individual, and while you are masquerading, I will be doing the reverse. By the time you come home I shall be so thoroughly self-investigated and set to rights, that a mere look at me will shake all the frivolity out of you."

"Miss Wedderburn will be there."

"I hope she may enjoy it."

"At least she will look so lovely that she will make others enjoy it."

He made no answer.

"You won't go—quite certain?"

"*Quite* certain, *mein Lieber*. Go yourself, and may you have much pleasure!"

Finding that he was in earnest, I went out to hire one domino and purchase one mask, instead of furnishing myself, as I had hoped, with two of each of those requisites.

It was Sunday, the first day of the Carnival, and that devoted to *the* ball of the season. There were others given, but this was the *Malerball*, or artists' ball. It was considered rather select, and had I not been lucky enough to have one or two pupils, members of the club, who had come forward with offerings of tickets, I might have tried in vain to gain admittance.

Everybody in Elberthal who was anybody would be at this ball. I had already been at one like it, as well as at several of the less select and rougher entertainments, and I found a pleasure which was somewhat strange even to myself in standing to one side and watching the motley throng and the formal procession which was every year organized by the artists who had the management of the proceedings.

The ball began at the timely hour of seven; about nine I enveloped myself in my domino, and took my way across the road to the scene of the festivities, which took up the whole three saals of the Tonhalle.

The night was bitter cold, but cold with that rawness which speaks of a coming thaw. The lamps were lighted

and despite the cold there was a dense crowd of watchers round the front of the building and in the gardens, with cold, inquisitive noses flattened against the long glass doors, through which I have seen the people stream in the pleasant May evenings after the concert or *Musikfest* into the illuminated gardens.

The last time I had been in the big saal had been to attend a dry Probe to a dry concert—the "Erste Walpurgisnacht" of Mendelssohn. The scene was changed now; the whole room was a mob—"motley the only wear." It was full to excess, so that there was scarcely room to move about, much less for dancing. For that purpose the middle saal of the three had been set aside, or rather a part of it railed off.

I felt a pleasant sense of ease and well-being—a security that I should not be recognized, as I had drawn the pointed hood of my domino over my head, and enveloped myself closely in its ample folds, and thus I could survey the brilliant *Maskenball* as I surveyed life—from a quiet unnoticed obscurity, and without taking part in its active affairs.

There was music going on as I entered. It could scarcely be heard above the babel of tongues which was sounding. People were moving as well as they could. I made my way slowly and unobtrusively towards the upper end of the saal, intending to secure a place on the great orchestra, and thence survey the procession.

I recognized dozens of people whom I knew personally, or by sight, or name, transformed from sober Rhenish

Bürger, or youths of the period, into persons and creatures whose appropriateness or inappropriateness to their every-day character it gave me much joy to witness. The most foolish young man I knew was attired as Cardinal Richelieu; the wisest, in certain respects, had a buffoon's costume, and plagued the statesman and churchman grievously.

By degrees I made my way through the mocking, taunting, flouting, many-colored crowd, to the orchestra, and gradually up its steps until I stood upon a fine vantage-ground. Near me were others: I looked round. One party seemed to keep very much together—a party which for richness and correctness of costume outshone all others in the room. Two ladies, one dark and one fair, were dressed as Elsa and Ortrud. A man, whose slight, tall, commanding figure I soon recognized, was attired in the blue mantle, silver helm and harness of Lohengrin the son of Percivale; and a second man, too boyish-looking for the character, was masked as Frederic of Telramund. Henry the Fowler was wanting, but the group were easily to be recognized as personating the four principal characters from Wagner's great opera.

They had apparently not been there long, for they had not yet unmasked. I had, however, no difficulty in recognizing any of them. The tall, fair girl in the dress of Elsa, was Miss Wedderburn; the Ortrud was Lady Le Marchant, and right well she looked the character. Lohengrin was von Francius, and Friedrich von Telramund was Mr. Arkwright, Sir Peter's secretary. Here was a party in whom I

could take some interest, and I immediately and in the most unprincipled manner devoted myself to watching them—myself unnoticed.

"Who in all that motley crowd would I wish to be?" I thought, as my eyes wandered over them.

The procession was just forming; the voluptuous music of *die Tausend und eine Nacht* waltzes was floating from the gallery and through the room. They went sweeping past —or running, or jumping; a ballet-girl whose moustache had been too precious to be parted with, and a lady of the *vieille cour* beside her, nuns and corpses; Christy Minstrels (English, these last, whose motives were constantly misunderstood), fools and astrologers, Gretchens, Clärchens, devils, Egmonts, Joans of Arc enough to have rescued France a dozen times; and peasants of every race; Turks and Finns; American Indians and Alfred the Great—it was tedious and dazzling.

Then the procession was got into order: a long string of German legends, all the misty chronicle of Gudrun, the *Nibelungenlied* and the Rheingold—Siegfried and Kriemhild—those two everlasting figures of beauty and heroism, love and tragedy, which stand forth in hues of pure brightness that no time can dim; Brunhild and von Tronje-Hagen—this was before the days of Bayreuth and the Tetralogy—Tannhäuser and Lohengrin, the Loreley, Walther von der Vogelweide, the two Elizabeths of the Wartburg, dozens of obscure legends and figures from *Volkslieder* and Folklore which I did not recognize; *Dornröschen*, Rubezahl; and the music to which they marched, was the

melancholy yet noble measure, "The Last Ten of the Fourth Regiment."

I surveyed the masks and masquerading for some time, keeping my eye all the while upon the party near me. They presently separated. Lady Le Marchant took the arm which von Francius offered her, and they went down the steps. Miss Wedderburn and the young secretary were left alone. I was standing near them, and two other masks, both in domino, hovered about. One wore a white domino with a scarlet rosette on the breast. The other was a black domino, closely disguised, who looked long after von Francius and Lady Le Marchant, and presently descended the orchestra steps and followed in their wake.

"Do not remain with me, Mr. Arkwright," I heard Miss Wedderburn say. "You want to dance. Go and enjoy yourself."

"I could not think of leaving you alone, Miss Wedderburn."

"Oh yes, you could, and can. I am not going to move from here. I want to look on—not to dance. You will find me here when you return."

Again she urged him not to remain with her, and finally he departed in search of amusement amongst the crowd below.

Miss Wedderburn was now alone. She turned; her eyes, through her mask, met mine through my mask, and a certain thrill shot through me. This was such an opportunity as I had never hoped for, and I told myself that I should be a great fool if I let it slip. But how to begin?

I looked at her. She was very beautiful, this young English girl, with the wonderful blending of fire and softness which had made me from the first think her one of the most attractive women I had ever seen.

As I stood, awkward and undecided, she beckoned me to her. In an instant I was at her side, bowing but maintaining silence.

"You *are* Herr Helfen, *nicht wahr?*" said she inquiringly.

"Yes," said I, and removed my mask. "How did you know it?"

"From something in your figure and attitude. Are you not dancing?"

"I—oh no!"

"Nor I—I am not in the humor for it. I never felt less like dancing, nor less like a masquerade." Then—hesitatingly, "Are you alone to-night?"

"Yes. Eugen would not come."

"He will not be here at all?"

"Not at all."

"I am surprised."

"I tried to persuade him to come," said I apologetically. "But he would not. He said he was going to have a little conversation at home with himself."

"So!" She turned to me with a mounting color, which I saw flush to her brow above her mask, and with parted lips.

"He has never cared for anything since Sigmund left us," I continued.

"Sigmund—was that the dear little boy?"

"You say very truly."

"Tell me about him. Was not his father very fond of him?"

"Fond! I never saw a man idolize his child so much. It was only need—the hardest need that made them part."

"How—need? You do not mean poverty?" said she, somewhat awestruck.

"Oh no! Moral necessity. I do not know the reason. I have never asked. But I know it was like a death-blow."

"Ah!" said she, and with a sudden movement removed her mask, as if she felt it stifling her, and looked me in the face with her beautiful clear eyes.

"Who could *oblige* him to part with his own child?" she asked.

"That I do not know, *mein Fräulein*. What I do know is that some shadow darkens my friend's life and embitters it—that he not only cannot do what he wishes, but is forced to do what he hates—and that parting was one of the things."

She looked at me with eagerness for some moments; then said quickly:

"I cannot help being interested in all this, but I fancy I ought not to listen to it, for—for—I don't think he would like it. He—he—I believe he dislikes me, and perhaps you had better say no more."

"*Dislikes* you!" I echoed. "Oh no!"

"Oh yes! he does," she repeated with a faint smile, which struggled for a moment with a look of pain, and

then was extinguished. "I certainly was once very rude to him, but I should not have thought he was an ungenerous man—should you?"

"He is not ungenerous: the very reverse: he is too generous."

"It does not matter, I suppose," said she, repressing some emotion. "It can make no difference, but it pains me to be so misunderstood and so behaved to by one who was at first so kind to me—for he was very kind."

"*Mein Fräulein*," said I, eager, though puzzled, "I cannot explain it: it is as great a mystery to me as to you. I know nothing of his past—nothing of what he has been or done; nothing of who he is—only of one thing I am sure—that he is not what he seems to be. He may be called Eugen Courvoisier: or he may call himself Eugen Courvoisier: he was once known by *some* name in a very different world to that he lives in now. I know nothing about that, but I know this—that *I believe in him*. I have lived more than three years with him: he is true and honorable: fantastically, chivalrously honorable" (her eyes were downcast and her cheeks burning). "He never did anything false or dishonest——"

A slight, low, sneering laugh at my right hand caused me to look up. That figure in a white domino with a black mask, and a crimson rosette on the breast, stood leaning up against the foot of the organ, but other figures were near: the laugh might have come from one of them: it might have nothing to do with us or our remarks. I went on in a vehement and eager tone:

"He is what we Germans call a *ganzer Kerl*—thorough in all—out and out good. Nothing will ever make me believe otherwise. Perhaps the mystery will never be cleared up. It doesn't matter to me. It will make no difference in my opinion of the only man I love."

A pause. Miss Wedderburn was looking at me: her eyes were full of tears: her face strangely moved. Yes—she loved him. It stood confessed in the very strength of the effort she made to be calm and composed. As she opened her lips to speak, that domino that I mentioned glided from her place and stooping down between us, whispered or murmured:

"You are a fool for your pains. Believe no one—least of all those who look most worthy of belief. He is *not* honest! he is *not* honorable. It is from shame and disgrace that he hides himself. Ask him if he remembers the 20th of April five years ago; you will hear what he has to say about it, and how brave and *honorable* he looks."

Swift as fire the words were said, and rapidly as the same she had raised herself and disappeared. We were left gazing at one another. Miss Wedderburn's face was blanched—she stared at me with large dilated eyes, and at last in a low voice of anguish and apprehension said:

"Oh, what does it mean?"

Her voice recalled me to myself.

"*It* may mean what it likes," said I calmly. "As I said, it makes no difference to me. I do not and will not believe that he ever did anything dishonorable."



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"Do you not?" said she tremulously. "But—but—Anna Sartorius does know something of him."

"Who is Anna Sartorius?"

"Why, that domino who spoke to us just now. But I forgot. You will not know her. She wanted long ago to tell me about him, and I would not let her, so she said I might learn for myself, and should never leave off until I knew the lesson by heart. I think she has kept her word," she added with a heart-sick sigh.

"You surely would not believe her if she said the same thing fifty times over," said I, not very reasonably, certainly.

"I do not know," she replied hesitatingly. "It is very difficult to know."

"Well, I would not. If the whole world accused him I would believe nothing except from his own lips."

"I wish I knew all about Anna Sartorius," said she slowly, and she looked as if seeking back in her memory to remember some dream. I stood beside her; the motley crowd ebbed and flowed beneath us, but the whisper we had heard had changed everything; and yet, no—to me not changed, but only darkened things.

In the meantime it had been growing later. Our conversation, with its frequent pauses, had taken a longer time than we had supposed. The crowd was thinning. Some of the women were going.

"I wonder where my sister is!" observed Miss Wedderburn rather wearily. Her face was pale, and her delicate head drooped as if it were overweighed and pulled

down by the superabundance of her beautiful chestnut hair, which came rippling and waving over her shoulders. A white satin petticoat, stiff with gold embroidery; a long trailing blue mantle of heavy brocade, fastened on the shoulders with golden clasps; a golden circlet in the gold of her hair; such was the dress, and right royally she became it. She looked a vision of loveliness. I wondered if she would ever act Elsa in reality; she would be assuredly the loveliest representative of that fair and weakminded heroine who ever trod the boards. Supposing it ever came to pass that she acted Elsa to some one else's Lohengrin, would she think of this night? Would she remember the great orchestra —and me, and the lights, and the people—our words—a whisper?

A pause.

"But where can Adelaide be?" she said at last. "I have not seen them since they left us."

"They are there," said I, surveying from my vantage-ground the thinning ranks. "They are coming up here too. And there is the other gentleman, Graf von Telramund, following them."

They drew up to the foot of the orchestra, and then Mr. Arkwright came up to seek us.

"Miss Wedderburn, Lady Le Marchant is tired, and thinks it is time to be going."

"So am I tired," she replied. I stepped back, but before she went away she turned to me, holding out her hand:

"Good-night, Herr Helfen. I, too, will not believe without proof."

We shook hands, and she went away.

The lamp was still burning: the room cold, the stove extinct. Eugen seated motionless near it.

"Eugen, art thou asleep?"

"I asleep, my dear boy! Well, how was it?"

"Eugen, I wish you had been there."

"Why?" He roused himself with an effort, and looked at me. His brow was clouded, his eyes too.

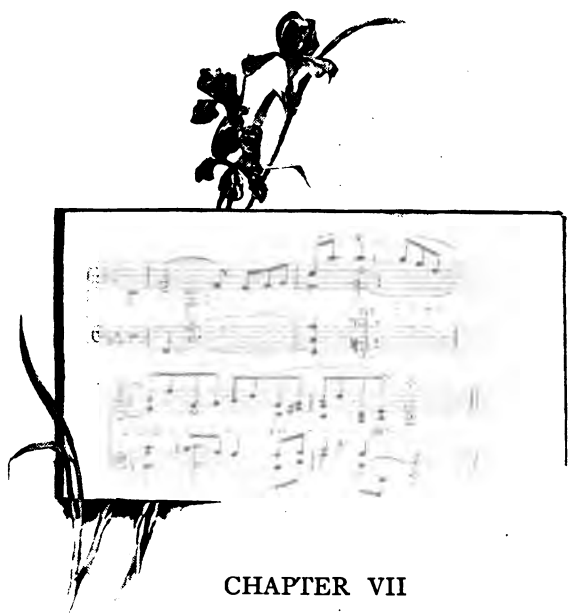
"Because you would have enjoyed it. I did. I saw Miss Wedderburn, and spoke to her. She looked lovely."

"In that case it would have been odd indeed if you had not enjoyed yourself."

"You are inexplicable."

"It is bedtime," he remarked, rising and speaking, as I thought, coldly.

We both retired. As for the whisper, frankly and honestly, I did not give it another thought.



CHAPTER VII

Träumerei

FOLLOWING Arkwright, I joined Adelaide and von Francius at the foot of the orchestra. She had sent word that she was tired. Looking at her, I thought indeed she must be *very* tired, so white, so sad she looked.

"Adelaide," I expostulated, "why did you remain so long?"

"Oh, I did not know it was so late. Come!"

We made our way out of the hall through the veranda to the entrance. Lady Le Marchant's carriage, it seemed, was ready and waiting. It was a pouring night. The thaw had begun. The steady downpour promised a cheerful

ending to the Carnival doings of the Monday and Tuesday; all but a few homeless or persevering wretches had been driven away. We drove away too. I noticed that the "good-night" between Adelaide and von Francius was of the most laconical character. They barely spoke, did not shake hands, and he turned and went to seek his cab before we had all got into the carriage.

Adelaide uttered not a word during our drive home, and I, leaning back, shut my eyes and lived the evening over again. Eugen's friend had laughed the insidious whisper to scorn. I could not deal so summarily with it; nor could I drive the words of it out of my head. They set themselves to the tune of the waltz, and rang in my ears:

"He is *not* honest; he is *not* honorable. It is from shame and disgrace that he is hiding. Ask him if he remembers the 20th of April five years ago."

The carriage stopped. A sleepy servant let us in. Adelaide, as we went upstairs, drew me into her dressing-room.

"A moment, May. Have you enjoyed yourself?"

"H'm—well—yes, and no. And you, Adelaide?"

"I never enjoy myself now," she replied very gently. "I am getting used to that, I think."

She clasped her jewelled hands, and stood by the lamp, whose calm light lit her calm face, showing it wasted and unutterably sad.

Something—a terror, a shrinking as from a strong menacing hand—shook me.

"Are you ill, Adelaide?" I cried.

"No. Good-night, dear May. *Schlaf' wohl*, as they say here."

To my unbounded astonishment, she leaned forward, and gave me a gentle kiss; then, still holding my hand, asked:

"Do you still say your prayers, May?"

"Sometimes."

"What do you say?"

"Oh! the same that I always used to say; they are better than any I can invent."

"Yes. I never do say mine now. I rather think I am afraid to begin again."

"Good-night, Adelaide," I said inaudibly; and she loosed my hand.

At the door I turned. She was still standing by the lamp; still her face wore the same strange, subdued look. With a heart oppressed by new uneasiness, I left her.

It must have been not till towards dawn that I fell into a sleep, heavy, but not quiet—filled with fantastic dreams, most of which vanished as soon as they had passed my mind. But one remained. To this day it is as vivid before me as if I had actually lived through it.

Meseemed again to be at the Grafenbergerdahl, again to be skating, again rescued—and by Eugen Courvoisier. But suddenly the scene changed; from a smooth sheet of ice, across which the wind blew nippingly, and above which the stars twinkled frostily, there was a huge waste of water which raged, while a tempest howled around—the clear moon was veiled, all was darkness and chaos. He saved

me, not by skating with me to the shore, but by clinging with me to some floating wood until we drove upon a bank and landed. But scarcely had we set foot upon the ground, than all was changed again. I was alone, seated upon a bench in the *Hofgarten*, on a spring afternoon. It was May; the chestnuts and acacias were in full bloom, and the latter made the air heavy with their fragrance. The nightingales sang richly, and I sat looking, from beneath the shade of a great tree, upon the fleeting Rhine, which glided by almost past my feet. It seemed to me that *I had been* sad—so sad as never before. A deep weight appeared to have been just removed from my heart, and yet so heavy had it been that I could not at once recover from its pressure; and even then, in the sunshine, and feeling that I had no single cause for care or grief, I was unhappy, with a reflex mournfulness.

And as I sat thus, it seemed that some one came and sat beside me without speaking, and I did not turn to look at him; but ever as I sat there and felt that he was beside me, the sadness lifted from my heart, until it grew so full of joy that tears rose to my eyes. Then he who was beside me placed his hand upon mine, and I looked at him. It was Eugen Courvoisier. His face and his eyes were full of sadness; but I knew that he loved me, though he said but one word, "Forgive!" to which I answered, "Can *you* forgive?" But I knew that I alluded to something much deeper than that silly little episode of having cut him at the theatre. He bowed his head; and then I thought I began to weep, covering my face with my hands;

but they were tears of exquisite joy, and the peace at my heart was the most entire I had ever felt. And he loosened my hands, and drew me to him and kissed me, saying "My love!" And as I felt—yes, actually felt—the pressure of his lips upon mine, and felt the spring shining upon me, and heard the very echo of the twitter of the birds, saw the light fall upon the water, and smelt the scent of the acacias, and saw the *Lotusblume* as she—

> "Duftet und weinet und zittert
> Vor Liebe und Liebesweh,"

I awoke, and confronted a gray February morning, felt a raw chilliness in the air, heard a cold, pitiless rain driven against the window; knew that my head ached, my heart harmonized therewith; that I was awake, not in a dream; that there had been no spring morning, no acacias, no nightingales; above all, no love—remembered last night, and roused to the consciousness of another day, the necessity of waking up and living on.

Nor could I rest or sleep. I rose, and contemplated through the window the driving rain and the soaking street, the sorrowful naked trees, the plain of the parade ground, which looked a mere waste of mud and half-melted ice; the long plain line of the Caserne itself—a cheering prospect, truly!

When I went downstairs I found Sir Peter, in heavy travelling overcoat, standing in the hall; a carriage stood at the door; his servant was putting in his master's luggage and rugs. I paused, in astonishment. Sir Peter

looked at me and smiled, with the dubious benevolence which he was in the habit of extending to me.

"I am very sorry to be obliged to quit your charming society, Miss Wedderburn, but business calls me imperatively to England; and, at least, I am sure that my wife cannot be unhappy with such a companion as her sister."

"You are going to England?"

"I am going to England. I have been called so hastily that I can make no arrangements for Adelaide to accompany me, and indeed it would not be at all pleasant for her, as I am only going on business; but I hope to return for her and bring her home in a few weeks. I am leaving Arkwright with you. He will see that you have all you want."

Sir Peter was smiling, ever smiling, with the smile which was my horror.

"A brilliant ball, last night, was it not?" he added, extending his hand to me, in farewell, and looking at me intently with eyes that fascinated and repelled me at once.

"Very, but—but—you were not there?"

"Was I not? I have a strong impression that I was. Ask my lady if she thinks I was there. And now good-by, and *au revoir!*"

He loosened my hand, descended the steps, entered the carriage, and was driven away. His departure ought to have raised a great weight from my mind, but it did not: it impressed me with a sense of coming disaster.

Adelaide breakfasted in her room. When I had finished I went to her. Her behavior puzzled me. She seemed

elated, excited, at the absence of Sir Peter, and yet, suddenly turning to me, she exclaimed eagerly:

"Oh, May! I wish I had been going to England, too! I wish I could leave this place, and never see it again!"

"Was Sir Peter at the ball, Adelaide?" I asked.

She turned suddenly pale: her lip trembled; her eye wavered, as she said in a low, uneasy voice:

"I believe he was—yes; in domino."

"What a sneaking thing to do!" I remarked candidly. "He had told us particularly that he was *not* coming."

"That very statement should have put us on our guard," she remarked.

"On our guard? Against what?" I asked unsuspectingly.

"Oh, nothing—nothing! I wonder when he will return! I would give a world to be in England!" she said, with a heart-sick sigh; and I, feeling very much bewildered, left her.

In the afternoon, despite wind and weather, I sallied forth, and took my way to my old lodgings in the *Wehrhahn*. Crossing a square leading to the street I was going to, I met Anna Sartorius. She bowed, looking at me mockingly. I returned her salutation, and remembered last night again, with painful distinctness. The air seemed full of mysteries and uncertainties: they clung about my mind like cobwebs, and I could not get rid of their soft, stifling influence.

Having arrived at my lodgings, I mounted the stairs. Frau Lützler met me.

"*Na nu, Fräulein!* You do not patronize me much now. My rooms are becoming too small for you, I reckon."

"Indeed, Frau Lützler, I wish I had never been in any larger ones," I answered earnestly.

"So! Well, 'tis true you look thin and worn—not as well as you used to. And were you—but I heard you were, so where's the use of telling lies about it—at the *Maskenball* last night? And how did you like it?"

"Oh, it was all very new to me. I never was at one before."

"*Nicht?* Then you *must* have been astonished. They say there was a Mephisto so good he would have deceived the devil himself. And you, Fräulein—I heard that you looked very beautiful."

"So! It must have been a mistake."

"*Doch nicht!* I have always maintained that at certain times you were far from bad-looking, and dressed and got up for the stage, would be absolutely handsome. Nearly any one can be that—if you are not too near the foot-lights, that is, and don't go behind the scenes."

With which neat slaying of a particular compliment by a general one, she released me, and let me go on my way upstairs.

Here I had some books and some music. But the room was cold; the books failed to interest me, and the music did not go—the piano was like me—out of tune. And yet I felt the need of some musical expression of the mood that was upon me. I bethought myself of the *Tonhalle*,

next door, almost, and that in the Rittersaal it would be quiet and undisturbed, as the ball that night was not to be held there, but in one of the large rooms of the Caserne.

Without pausing to think a second time of the plan I left the house, and went to the *Tonhalle*, only a few steps away. In consequence of the rain and bad weather almost every trace of the Carnival had disappeared. I found the *Tonhalle* deserted save by a barmaid at the Restauration. I asked her if the Rittersaal were open, and she said yes. I passed on. As I drew near the door I heard music: the piano was already being played. Could it be von Francius who was there? I did not think so. The touch was not his—neither so practised, so brilliant, nor so sure.

Satisfied, after listening a moment, that it was not he, I resolved to go in and pass through the room. If it were any one whom I could send away I would do so, if not, I could go away again myself.

I entered. The room was somewhat dark, but I went in and had almost come to the piano before I recognized the player—Courvoisier. Overcome with vexation and confusion at the *contretemps*, I paused a moment, undecided whether to turn back and go out again. In any case I resolved not to remain in the room. He was seated with his back to me, and still continued to play. Some music was on the desk of the piano before him.

I might turn back without being observed. I would do so. Hardly, though—a mirror hung directly before the piano, and I now saw that while he continued to play, he was quietly looking at me, and that his keen eyes—that

hawk's glance which I knew so well—must have recognized me. That decided me. I would not turn back. It would be a silly, senseless proceeding, and would look much more invidious than my remaining. I walked up to the piano, and he turned, still playing.

"*Guten Tag, mein Fräulein.*"

I merely bowed, and began to search through a pile of songs and music upon the piano. I would at any rate take some away with me to give *some* color to my proceedings. Meanwhile, he played on.

I selected a song, not in the least knowing what it was, and rolling it up, was turning away.

"Are you busy, Miss Wedderburn?"

"N—no."

"Would it be asking too much of you to play the pianoforte accompaniment?"

"I will try," said I, speaking briefly, and slowly drawing off my gloves.

"If it is disagreeable to you, don't do it," said he, pausing.

"Not in the very least," said I, avoiding looking at him.

He opened the music. It was one of Jensen's *Wanderbilder* for piano and violin—the *Kreuz am Wege*.

"I have only tried it once before," I remarked, "and I am a dreadful bungler."

"*Bitte sehr!*" said he, smiling, arranging his own music on one of the stands and adding, "Now I am ready."

I found my hands trembling so much that I could scarcely follow the music. Truly this man, with his changes from silence to talkativeness, from ironical hardness to cordiality, was a puzzle and a trial to me.

Das Kreuz am Wege turned out rather lame. I said so when it was over.

"Suppose we try it again," he suggested, and we did so. I found my fingers lingering and forgetting their part as I listened to the piercing beauty of his notes.

"That is dismal," said he.

"It is a dismal subject, is it not?"

"Suggestive, at least. 'The Cross by the Wayside.' Well, I have a mind for something more cheerful. Did you leave the ball early last night?"

"No; not very early."

"Did you enjoy it?"

"It was all new to me—very interesting—but I don't think I quite enjoyed it."

"Ah, you should see the balls at Florence, or Venice, or Vienna!"

He smiled as he leaned back, as if thinking over past scenes.

"Yes," said I, dubiously, "I don't think I care much for such things, though it is interesting to watch the little drama going on around."

"And to act in it," I also thought, remembering Anna Sartorius and her whisper, and I looked at him. "*Not* honest, *not* honorable. Hiding from shame and disgrace." I looked at him and did not believe it. For the moment

the torturing idea left me. I was free from it and at peace.

"Were you going to practise?" he asked. "I fear I disturb you."

"Oh no! It does not matter in the least. I shall not practise now."

"I want to try some other things," said he, "and Friedhelm's and my piano was not loud enough for me, nor was there sufficient space between our walls for the sounds of a Symphony. Do you not know the mood?"

"Yes."

"But I am afraid to ask you to accompany me."

"Why?"

"You seem unwilling."

"I am not; but I should have supposed that my unwillingness—if I had been unwilling—would have been an inducement to you to ask me."

"*Herrgott!* Why?"

"Since you took a vow to be disagreeable to me, and to make me hate you."

A slight flush passed rapidly over his face, as he paused for a moment and bit his lips.

"*Mein Fräulein*—that night I was in bitterness of spirit—I hardly knew what I was saying——"

"I will accompany you," I interrupted him, my heart beating. "Only how can I begin unless you play, or tell me what you want to play?"

"True," said he, laughing, and yet not moving from his place beside the piano, upon which he had leaned his

elbow, and across which he now looked at me with the self-same kindly, genial glance as that he had cast upon me across the little table at the Köln restaurant. And yet not the self-same glance, but another, which I would not have exchanged for that first one.

If he would but begin to play, I felt that I should not mind so much; but when he sat there and looked at me and half smiled, without beginning anything practical, I felt the situation at least trying.

He raised his eyes as a door opened at the other end of the saal.

"Ah, there is Friedhelm," said he, "now he will take seconds."

"Then I will not disturb you any longer."

"On the contrary," said he, laying his hand upon my wrist. (My dream of the morning flashed into my mind.) "It would be better if you remained, then we could have a trio. Friedel, come here! You are just in time. Fräulein Wedderburn will be good enough to accompany us, and we can try the Fourth Symphony."

"What you call 'Spring'?" inquired Helfen, coming up smilingly. "With all my heart. Where is the score?"

"*What you call Spring?*" Was it possible that in Winter—on a cold and unfriendly day—we were going to have Spring, leafy bloom, the desert filled with leaping springs, and blossoming like a rose? Full of wonder, surprise, and a certain excitement at the idea, I sat still and thought of my dream, and the rain beat against the windows, and a

draughty wind fluttered the tinselly decorations of last night. The floor was strewed with fragments of garments torn in the crush—paper and silken flowers, here a rosette, there a buckle, a satin bow, a tinsel spangle. Benches and tables were piled about the room, which was half dark; only to westward, through one window, was visible a paler gleam, which might by comparison be called light.

The two young men turned over the music, laughing at something, and chaffing each other. I never in my life saw two such entire friends as these; they seemed to harmonize most perfectly in the midst of their unlikeness to each other.

"Excuse that we kept you waiting, *mein Fräulein*," said Courvoisier, placing some music before me. "This fellow is so slow, and will put everything into order as he uses it."

"Well for you that I am, *mein Lieber*," said Helfen composedly. "If any one had the enterprise to offer a prize to the most extravagant, untidy fellow in Europe, the palm would be yours—by a long way too."

"Friedel binds his music and numbers it," observed Courvoisier. "It is one of the most beautiful and affecting of sights to behold him with scissors, paste-pot, brush, and binding. It occurs periodically about four times a year, I think, and moves me almost to tears when I see it."

"*Der edle Ritter* leaves *his* music unbound, and borrows mine on every possible occasion when his own property is scattered to the four winds of heaven."

"*Aber! aber!*" cried Eugen. "That is *too* much! I

call Frau Schmidt to witness that all my music is put in one place."

"I never said it wasn't. But you never can find it when you want it, and the confusion is delightfully increased by your constantly rushing off to buy a new *Partitur* when you can't find the old one; so you have three or four of each."

"This is all to show off what he considers his own good qualities: a certain slow, methodical plodding, and a good memory, which are natural gifts, but which he boasts of as if they were acquired virtues. He binds his music because he is a pedant and a prig, and can't help it; a bad fellow to get on with. Now, *mein Bester*, for the *Frühling*."

"But the Fräulein ought to have it explained," expostulated Helfen, laughing. "Every one has not the misfortune to be so well acquainted with you as I am. He has rather insane fancies, sometimes," he added, turning to me, "without rhyme or reason that I am aware, and he chooses to assert that Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, or the chief *motivi* of it, occurred to him on a spring day, when the master was, for a time, quite charmed from his bitter humor, and had, perhaps, some one by his side who put his heart in tune with the spring songs of the birds, the green of the grass, the scent of the flowers. So he calls it the *Frühling Symphonie*, and will persist in playing it as such. I call the idea rather far-fetched, but then that is nothing unusual with him."

"Having said your remarkably stupid say, which Miss Wedderburn has far too much sense to heed in the least,

suppose you allow us to begin," said Courvoisier, giving the other a push towards his violin.

But we were destined to have yet another coadjutor, in the shape of Karl Linders, who at that moment strolled in, and was hailed by his friends with jubilation.

"Come and help! Your *cello* will give just the mellowness that is wanted," said Eugen.

"I must go and get it then," said Karl, looking at me.

Eugen, with an indescribable expression as he intercepted the glance, introduced us to one another. Karl and Friedhelm Helfen went off to another part of the *Tonhalle* to fetch Karl's violoncello, and we were left alone again.

"Perhaps I ought not to have introduced him. I forgot *Lohengrin*," said Eugen.

"You know that you did *not*," said I in a low voice.

"No," he answered, almost in the same tone. "It was thinking of that which led me to introduce poor old Karl to you. I thought, perhaps, that you would accept it as a sign—will you?"

"A sign of what?"

"That I feel myself to have been in the wrong throughout—and forgive."

As I sat, amazed and a little awed at this almost literal fulfilment of my dream, the others returned.

Karl contributed the tones of his mellowest of instruments, which he played with a certain pleasant breadth and brightness of coloring, and my dream came ever truer and truer. The Symphony *was* as spring-like as possible.

We tried it nearly all through; the hymn-like and yet fairy-like first movement; the second, that song of universal love, joy, and thanksgiving, with Beethoven's masculine hand evident throughout. To the notes there seemed to fall a sunshine into the room, and we could see the fields casting their covering of snow, and withered trees bursting into bloom; brooks swollen with warm rain, birds busy at nest-making; clumps of primroses on velvet leaves, and the subtle scent of violets; youths and maidens with love in their eyes, and even a hint of later warmth; when hedges should be white with hawthorn, and the woodland slopes look, with their sheets of hyacinths, as if some of heaven's blue had been spilt upon earth's grass.

As the last strong, melodious modulations ceased, Courvoisier pointed to one of the windows.

"Friedhelm, you wretched unbeliever, behold the refutation of your theories. The Symphony has brought the sun out."

"For the first time," said Friedhelm, as he turned his earnest young face with its fringe of loose brown hair towards the sneaking sunray which was certainly looking shyly in. "As a rule the very heavens weep at the performance. Don't you remember the last time we tried it, it began to rain instantly?"

"Miss Wedderburn's coöperation must have secured its success, then, on this occasion," said Eugen gravely, glancing at me for a moment.

"Hear! hear!" murmured Karl, screwing up his violoncello, and smiling furtively.

"Oh, I am afraid I hindered rather than helped," said I; "but it is very beautiful."

"But not like Spring, is it?" asked Friedhelm.

"Well, I think it is."

"There! I knew she would declare for me," said Courvoisier calmly, at which Karl Linders looked up in some astonishment.

"Shall we try this *Träumerei*, Miss Wedderburn, if you are not tired?"

I turned willingly to the piano, and we played Schumann's exquisite little "*Dreams*."

"Ah," said Eugen, with a deep sigh (and his face had grown sad), "isn't that the essence of sweetness and poetry? Here's another which is lovely. *Noch ein Paar, nicht wahr?*"

"And it will be *noch ein Paar* until our fingers drop off," scolded Friedhelm, who seemed, however, very willing to await that consummation. We went through many of the *Kinderscenen* and some of the *Kreissleriana*, and just as we finished a sweet little *Bittendes Kind*, the twilight grew almost into darkness, and Courvoisier laid his violin down.

"Miss Wedderburn, thank you a thousand times!"

"Oh, *bitte sehr!*" was all I could say. I wanted to say so much more; to say that I had been made happy; my sadness dispelled, a dream half fulfilled, but the words stuck, and had they come ever so flowingly I could not have uttered them with Friedhelm Helfen, who knew so much, looking at us, and Karl Linders on his best behavior in what he considered superior company.

I do not know how it was that Karl and Friedhelm, as we all came from the *Tonhalle*, walked off to the house, and Eugen and I were left to walk alone through the soaking streets, emptied of all their revellers, and along the dripping *Königsallée*, with its leafless chestnuts, to Sir Peter's house. It was cold, it was wet—cheerless, dark, and dismal, and I was very happy—very insanely so. I gave a glance once or twice at my companion. The brightness had left his face; it was stern and worn again, and his lips set as if with the repression of some pain.

"Herr Courvoisier, have you heard from your little boy?"

"No."

"No?"

"I do not expect to hear from him, *mein Fräulein*. When he left me we parted altogether."

"Oh, how dreadful!"

No answer. And we spoke no more until he said "Good-evening" to me at the door of No. 3. As I went in I reflected that I might never meet him thus face to face again. Was it an opportunity missed, or was it a brief glimpse of unexpected joy?

CHAPTER VIII

The Truth

As days went on and grew into weeks, and weeks paired off until a month passed, and I still saw the same stricken look upon my sister's face, my heart grew full of foreboding.

One morning the astonishing news came that Sir Peter had gone to America.

"America!" I ejaculated (it was always I who acted the part of chorus and did the exclamations and questioning), and I looked at Harry Arkwright, who had communicated the news, and who held an open letter in his hand.

"Yes, to America, to see about a railway which looks very bad. He has no end of their Bonds," said Harry, folding up the letter.

"When will he return?"

"He doesn't know. Meanwhile we are to stay where we are."

Adelaide, when we spoke of this circumstance, said bitterly: "Everything is against me!"

"Against you, Adelaide?" said I, looking apprehensively at her.

"Yes, everything!" she repeated.

She had never been very effusive in her behavior to others; she was now, if possible, still less so, but the uniform quietness and gentleness with which she now treated all who came in contact with her, puzzled and troubled me. *What* was it that prayed upon her mind? In looking round for a cause my thoughts lighted first on one person, then on another: I dismissed the idea of all, except von Francius, with a smile. Shortly I abandoned that idea too. True, he was a man of very different calibre from the others; a man, too, for whom Adelaide had conceived a decided friendship, though in these latter

days even that seemed to be dying out. He did not come so often; when he did come they had little to say to each other. Perhaps, after all, the cause of her sad looks lay no deeper than her everyday life, which must necessarily grow more mournful day by day. She could feel intensely, as I had lately become aware, and had, too, a warm, quick imagination. It might be that a simple weariness of life, and the anticipation of long years to come of such a life lay so heavily upon her soul as to have wrought that gradual change.

Sometimes I was satisfied with this theory; at others it dwindled into a miserably inadequate measure. When Adelaide once or twice kissed me, smiled at me, and called me "dear," it was on my lips to ask the meaning of the whole thing, but it never passed them. I dared not speak when it came to the point.

One day, about this time, I met Anna Sartorius in one of the picture exhibitions. I would have bowed and passed her, but she stopped and spoke to me.

"I have not seen you often lately," said she; "but I assure you, you will hear more of me sometime—and before long."

Without replying, I passed on. Anna had ceased even to pretend to look friendly upon me, and I did not feel much alarm as to her power for or against my happiness or peace of mind.

Regularly, once a month, I wrote to Miss Hallam, and occasionally had a few lines from Stella, who had become a protégée of Miss Hallam's too. They appeared to get

on very well together, at which I did not wonder; for Stella, with all her youthfulness, was of a cynical turn of mind, which must suit Miss Hallam well.

My greatest friend in Elberthal was good little Doctor Mittendorf, who had brought his wife to call upon me, and to whose house I had been invited several times since Miss Hallam's departure.

During this time I worked more steadily than ever, and with a deeper love of my art for itself. Von Francius was still my master and my friend. I used to look back upon the days, now nearly a year ago, when I first saw him, and seeing him, distrusted and only half-liked him, and wondered at myself; for I had now as entire a confidence in him as can by any means be placed in a man. He had thoroughly won my esteem, respect, admiration—in a measure, too, my affection. I liked the power of him; the strong hand with which he carried things in his own way; the idiomatic language, and quick, curt sentences in which he enunciated his opinions. I felt him like a strong, kind, and thoughtful elder brother, and have had abundant evidence in his deeds and in some brief, unemotional words of his that he felt a great regard of the fraternal kind for me. It has often comforted me, that friendship—pure, disinterested and manly on his side, grateful and unwavering on mine.

I still retained my old lodgings in the Wehrhahn, and was determined to do so. I would not be tied to remain in Sir Peter Le Marchant's house unless I chose. Adelaide wished me to come and remain with her altogether.

She said Sir Peter wished it too; he had written and said she might ask me. I asked what was Sir Peter's motive in wishing it? Was it not a desire to humiliate both of us, and to show us that we—the girl who had scorned him, and the woman who had sold herself to him—were in the end dependent upon him, and must follow his will and submit to his pleasure?

She reddened, sighed, and owned that it was true; nor did she press me any further.

A month, then, elapsed between the Carnival in February and the next great concert in the latter end of March. It was rather a special concert, for von Francius had succeeded, in spite of many obstacles, in bringing out the Choral Symphony.

He conducted well that night; and he, Courvoisier, Friedhelm Helfen, Karl Linders, and one or two others, formed in their white heat of enthusiasm a leaven which leavened the whole lump. Orchestra and chorus alike did a little more than their possible, without which no great enthusiasm can be carried out. As I watched von Francius, it seemed to me that a new soul had entered into the man. I did not believe that a year ago he could have conducted a Choral Symphony as he did that night. Can any one enter into the broad, eternal clang of the great "world-story" unless he has a private story of his own which may serve him in some measure as a key to its mystery? I think not. It was a night of triumph for Max von Francius. Not only was the glorious music cheered and applauded, he was called to receive a meed of thanks for

having once more given to the world a never-dying joy and beauty.

I was in the chorus. Down below I saw Adelaide and her devoted attendant, Harry Arkwright. She looked whiter and more subdued than ever. All the splendor of the praise of "joy" could not bring joy to her heart—

"Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt"

brought no warmth to her cheek, nor lessened the load on her breast.

The concert over, we returned home. Adelaide and I retired to her dressing-room, and her maid brought us tea. She seated herself in silence.

For my part I was excited and hot, and felt my cheeks glowing. I was so stirred that I could not sit still, but moved to and fro, wishing that all the world could hear that music, and repeating lines from the *Ode to Joy*, the grand march-like measure, feeling my heart uplifted with the exaltation of its opening strain:

"Freude, schöner Götterfunken!
Tochter aus Elysium!"

As I paced about, thus excitedly, Adelaide's maid came in, with a note. Mr. Arkwright had received it from Herr von Francius, who had desired him to give it to Lady Le Marchant.

Adelaide opened it, and I went on with my chant. I know now how dreadful it must have sounded to her.

"Freude trinken alle Wesen
An den Brüsten der Natur—"

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"May!" said Adelaide faintly.

I turned in my walk and looked at her. White as death. She held the paper towards me with a steady hand, and I, the song of joy slain upon my lips, took it. It was a brief note from von Francius.

"I let you know, my lady, first of all, that I have accepted the post of Musikdirektor in ——. It will be made known to-morrow."

I held the paper and looked at her. Now I knew the reason of her pallid looks. I had indeed been blind. I might have guessed better.

"Have you read it?" she asked, and she stretched her arms above her head, as if panting for breath.

"Adelaide!" I whispered, going up to her; "Adelaide—oh!"

She fell upon my neck. She did not speak and I, speechless, held her to my breast.

"You love him, Adelaide?" I said at last.

"With my whole soul!" she answered in a low, very low, but vehement voice. "With my whole soul."

"And you have owned it to him?"

"Yes."

"Tell me," said I, "how it was."

"I think I have loved him since almost the first time I saw him—he made quite a different impression upon me than other men do—quite. I hardly knew myself. He mastered me. No other man ever did—except—" she shuddered a little, "and that only because I tied myself hand and foot. But I liked the mastery. It was delicious:



it was rest and peace. It went on for long. We knew—each knew quite well that we loved, but he never spoke of it. He saw how it was with me and he helped me—oh, why is he so good! He never tried to trap me into any acknowledgment. He never made any use of the power he knew he had, except to keep me right. But at the *Masken-ball*—I do not know how it was—we were alone in all the crowd—there was something said—a look. It was all over. But he was true to the last. He did not say, 'Throw everything up and come to me.' He said, 'Give me the only joy that we may have. Tell me you love me.' And I told him. I said, 'I love you with my life and my soul, and everything I have, for ever and ever.' And that is true. He said, 'Thank you, milady. I accept the condition of my knighthood,' and kissed my hand. There was some one following us. It was Sir Peter. He heard all, and he has punished me for it since. He will punish me again."

A pause.

"That is all that has been said. He does not know that Sir Peter knows, for he has never alluded to it since. He has spared me. I say he is a noble man."

She raised herself, and looked at me.

Dear sister! With your love and your pride, your sins and your folly, inexpressibly dear to me! I pressed a kiss upon her lips.

"Von Francius *is* good, Adelaide; he *is* good."

"Von Francius would have told me this himself, but he has been afraid for me; some time ago he said to me that

he had the offer of a post at a distance. That was asking my advice. I found out what it was, and said, 'Take it.' He has done so."

"Then you have decided?" I stammered.

"To part. He has strength. So have I. It is my own fault. May—I could bear it if it were for myself alone. I have had my eyes opened now. I see that when people do wrong they drag others into it—they punish those they love—it is part of their own punishment.

A pause. Facts, I felt, were pitiless; but the glow of friendship for von Francius was like a strong fire. In the midst of the keenest pain one finds a true man, and the discovery is like a sudden soothing of sharp anguish, or like the finding a strong comrade in a battle.

Adelaide had been very self-restrained and quiet all this time, but now suddenly broke out into low, quick, half-sobbed-out words:

"Oh, I love him, I love him! It is dreadful! How shall I go through with it?"

Ay, there was the rub! Not one short sharp pang, and over—all fire quenched in cool mists of death and unconsciousness, but long years to come of daily, hourly, paying the price; incessant compunction, active punishment. A prospect for a martyr to shrink from, and for a woman who has made a mistake to—live through.

We needed not further words. The secret was told, and the worst known. We parted. Von Francius was from this moment a sacred being to me.

But from this time he scarcely came near the house—

not even to give me my lessons. I went to my lodgings and had them there. Adelaide said nothing, asked not a question concerning him, nor mentioned his name, and the silence on his side was almost as profound as that on hers. It seemed as if they feared that should they meet, speak, look each other in the eyes, all resolution would be swept away, and the end hurry resistless on.



CHAPTER IX

" And behold, though the way was light and the sun did shine, yet my heart was ill at ease, for a sinister blot did now and again fleck the sun, and a muttered sound perturbed the air. And he repeated oft, ' One hath told me—thus—or thus.' "

KARL LINDERS, our old acquaintance, was now our fast friend. Many changes had taken place in the *personnel* of our fellow-workmen in the *Kapelle*, but Eugen, Karl and

I remained stationary, in the same places and holding the same rank as on the day we had first met. He, Karl, had been from the first more congenial to me than any other of my fellows (Eugen excepted of course). Why, I could never exactly tell. There was about him a contagious cheerfulness, good-humor and honesty. He was a sinner, but no rascal; a wild fellow—*Taugenichts—wilder Gesell*, as our phraseology had it, but the furthest thing possible from a knave.

Since his visits to us and his earnest efforts to curry favor with Sigmund by means of nondescript wool beasts, domestic or of prey, he had grown much nearer to us. He was the only intimate we had—the only person who came in and out of our quarters at any time; the only man who sat and smoked with us in an evening. At the time when Karl put in his first appearance in these pages he was a young man not only not particular, but utterly reckless as to the society he frequented. Any one, he was wont to say, was good enough to talk with, or to listen while talked to. Karl's conversation could not be called either affected or pedantic: his taste was catholic, and comprised within wide bounds; he considered all subjects that were amusing appropriate matter of discussion, and to him most subjects were—or were susceptible of being made—amusing.

Latterly, however, it would seem that a process of growth had been going on in him. Three years had worked a difference. In some repects he was, thank heaven! still the old Karl—the old careless, reckless, aimless fellow; but in others he was metamorphosed.

Karl Linders, a handsome fellow himself, and a slave to beauty, as he was careful to inform us—susceptible in the highest degree to *real* loveliness—so he often told us—and in love on an average, desperately and for ever, once a week, had at last fallen really and actually in love.

For a long time we did not guess it—or rather, accepting his being in love as a chronic state of his being—one of the "inseparable accidents" which may almost be called qualities, we wondered what lay at the bottom of his sudden intense sobriety of demeanor and propriety of conduct, and looked for some cause deeper than love, which did not usually have that effect upon him: we thought it might be debt. We studied the behavior itself: we remarked that for upwards of ten days he had never lauded the charms of any young woman connected with the choral or terpsichorean staff of the opera, and wondered.

We saw that he had had his hair very much cut, and we told him frankly that we did not think it improved him. To our great surprise he told us that we knew nothing about it, and requested us to mind our own business, adding testily, after a pause, that he did not see why on earth a set of men like us should make ourselves conspicuous by the fashion of our hair, as if we were Absaloms or Samsons.

"Samson had a Delilah, *mein Lieber*," said I, eying him. "She shore his locks for him. Tell us frankly who has acted the part by you."

"Bah! Can a fellow have no sense in his own head, to find such things out? Go and do likewise, and I can tell you you'll be improved."

But we agreed when he was gone that the loose locks, drooping over the laughing glance, suited him better than that neatly-cropped propriety.

Days passed, and Karl was still not his old self. It became matter of public remark that his easy, short jacket, a mongrel kind of garment to which he was deeply attached, was discarded, not merely for grand occasions, but even upon the ordinary Saturday night concert, yea, even for walking out at mid-day, and a superior frock-coat substituted for it—a frock-coat in which, we told him, he looked quite *edel*. At which he pished and pshawed, but surreptitiously adjusted his collar before the looking-glass which the propriety and satisfactoriness of our behavior had induced Frau Schmidt to add to our responsibilities, pulled his cuffs down, and remarked *en passant*, that "the *'cello* was a horribly ungraceful instrument."

"Not as *you* use it," said we both politely, and allowed him to lead the way to the concert-room.

A few evenings later he strolled into our room, lit a cigar, and sighed deeply.

"What ails thee, then, Karl?" I asked.

"I've something on my mind," he replied uneasily.

"That we know," put in Eugen; "and a pretty big lump it must be too. Out with it, man! Has she accepted the bottle-nosed oboist after all?"

"No."

"Have you got into debt? How much? I dare say we can manage it between us."

"No—oh no! I'm five thaler to the good."

Our countenances grew more serious. *Not* debt? Then what was it, what could it be?

"I hope nothing has happened to Gretchen," suggested Eugen, for Gretchen, his sister, was the one permanently strong love of Karl's heart.

"Oh no! *Das Mädel* is very well, and getting on in her classes."

"Then *what* is it?"

"I'm—engaged—to be married."

I grieve to say that Eugen and I, after staring at him for some few minutes, until we had taken in the announcement, both burst into the most immoderate laughter—till the tears ran down our cheeks, and our sides ached.

Karl sat quite still, unresponsive, puffing away at his cigar; and when we had finished, or rather were becoming a little more moderate in the expression of our amusement, he knocked the ash away from the weed, and remarked:

"That's blind jealousy. You both know that there isn't a *Mädchen* in the place who would look at you, so you try to laugh at people who are better off than yourselves."

This was so stinging (from the tone, more than the words), as coming from the most sweet-tempered fellow I ever knew, that we stopped—Eugen apologized, and we asked who the lady was.

"I shouldn't suppose you cared to know," said he,

rather sulkily. "And it's all very fine to laugh, but let me see the man who even smiles at her—he shall learn who I am."

We assured him, with the strongest expressions that we could call to our aid, that it was the very idea of his *being* engaged that made us laugh—not any disrespect, and begged his pardon again. By degrees he relented. We still urgently demanded the name of the lady.

"*Als Verlobte empfehlen sich* Karl Linders and—who else?" asked Eugen.

"*Als Verlobte empfehlen sich** Karl Linders and Clara Steinmann," said Karl, with much dignity.

"Clara Steinmann," we repeated in tones of respectful gravity, "I never heard of her."

"No, she keeps herself rather reserved and select," said Karl impressively. "She lives with her aunt in the Alléestrasse, at number thirty-nine."

"Number thirty-nine!" we both ejaculated.

"Exactly so! What have you to say against it?" demanded Herr Linders, glaring round upon us with an awful majesty.

"Nothing—oh, less than nothing. But I know now where you mean. It is a boarding-house, *nicht wahr?*"

He nodded sedately.

"I have seen the young lady," said I, carefully observing all due respect. "Eugen, you must have seen her too.

* The German custom on an engagement taking place is to announce it with the above words, signifying "M. and N. announce [or recommend] themselves as betrothed." This appears in the newspaper—as a marriage with us.

Miss Wedderburn used to come with her to the *Instrumental* Concerts before she began to sing."

"Right!" said Karl graciously. "She did. Clara liked Miss Wedderburn very much."

"Indeed!" said we respectfully, and fully recognizing that this was quite a different affair from any of the previous flirtations with chorus-singers and ballet-girls which had taken up so much of his attention.

"I don't know her," said I, "I have not that pleasure, but I am sure you are to be congratulated, old fellow—so I do congratulate you very heartily."

"Thank you," said he.

"I can't congratulate *you*, Karl, as I don't know the lady," said Eugen, "but I do congratulate *her*," laying his hand upon Karl's shoulder; "I hope she knows the kind of man she has won, and is worthy of him."

A smile, of the Miss Squeers description—"Tilda, I pities your ignorance and despises you,"—crossed Karl's lips as he said:

"Thank you. No one else knows. It only took place —decidedly, you know, to-night. I said I should tell two friends of mine—she said she had no objection. I should not have liked to keep it from you two. I wish," said Karl, whose eyes had been roving in a seeking manner round the room, and who now brought his words out with a run; "I wish Sigmund had been here too. I wish she could have seen him. She loves children: she has been very good to Gretchen."

Eugen's hand dropped from our friend's shoulder. He

walked to the window without speaking, and looked out into the darkness—as he was then in more senses than one often wont to do—nor did he break the silence nor look at us again until some time after Karl and I had resumed the conversation.

So did the quaint fellow announce his engagement to us. It was quite a romantic little history, for it turned out that he had loved the girl for full two years, but for a long time had not been able even to make her acquaintance, and when that was acccomplished had hardly dared to speak of his love for her; for though she was sprung from much the same class as himself she was in much better circumstances, and accustomed to a life of ease and plenty, even if she were little better in reality than a kind of working housekeeper. A second suitor for her hand had, however, roused Karl into boldness and activity: he declared himself, and was accepted. Despite the opposition of Frau Steinmann, who thought the match in every way beneath her niece (why, I never could tell), the lovers managed to carry their purpose so far as the betrothal or *Verlobung* went: marriage was a question strictly of the future. It was during the last weeks of suspense and uncertainty that Karl had been unable to carry things off in quite his usual light-hearted manner: it was after finally conquering that he came to make us partakers in his satisfaction.

In time we had the honor of an introduction to Fräulein Steinmann, and our amazement and amusement were equally great. Karl was a tall, handsome, well-knit fellow,

with an exceptionally graceful figure and what I call a typical German face (typical, I mean, in one line of development)—open, frank, handsome, with the broad traits, smiling lips, clear and direct guileless eyes, waving hair and aptitude for geniality which are the chief characteristics of that type—not the highest, perhaps, but a good one, nevertheless—honest, loyal, brave—a kind which makes good fathers and good soldiers—how many a hundred are mourned since 1870–71!

He had fallen in love with a little stout dumpy *Mädchen*, honest and open as himself, but stupid in all outside domestic matters. She was evidently desperately in love with him, and could understand a good *Walzer* or a sentimental song, so that his musical talents were not altogether thrown away. I liked her better after a time. There was something touching in the way in which she said to me once:

"He might have done so much better. I am such an ugly, stupid thing, but when he said did I love him or could I love him, or something like that, *um Gotteswillen*, Herr Helfen, what could I say?"

"I am sure you did the best possible thing both for him and for you," I was able to say, with emphasis and conviction.

Karl had now become a completely reformed and domesticated member of society: now he wore the frock-coat several times a week, and confided to me that he thought he must have a new one soon. Now too did other strange results appear of his engagement to Fräulein Clara

(he got sentimental and called her *Clärchen* sometimes). He had now the entrée of Frau Steinmann's house, and there met feminine society several degrees above that to which he had been accustomed. He was obliged to wear a permanently polite and polished manner (which, let me hasten to say, was not the least trouble to him). No chaffing of these young ladies—no offering to take them to places of amusement of any but the very sternest and severest respectability.

He took Fräulein Clara out for walks. They jogged along arm-in-arm, Karl radiant, Clara no less so, and sometimes they were accompanied by another inmate of Frau Steinmann's house—a contrast to them both. She lived *en famille* with her hostess, not having an income large enough to admit of indulging in quite separate quarters, and her name was Anna Sartorius.

It was very shortly after his engagement that Karl began to talk to me about Anna Sartorius. She was a clever young woman, it seemed—or as he called her, a *gescheites Mädchen.* She could talk most wonderfully. She had travelled—she had been in England and France, and seen the world, said Karl. They all passed very delightful evenings together sometimes, diversified with music and song and the racy jest—at which times Frau Steinmann became quite another person, and he, Karl, felt himself in heaven.

The substance of all this was told me by him one day at a Probe, where Eugen had been conspicuous by his absence. Perhaps his absence reminded Karl of some previous conversation, for he said:

"She must have seen Courvoisier before somewhere. She asks a good many questions about him, and when I said I knew him she laughed."

"Look here, Karl! don't go talking to outsiders about Eugen—or any of us. His affairs are no business of Fräulein Sartorius, or any other busybody."

"*I* talk about him! What do you mean? Upon my word I don't know how the conversation took that turn; but I am sure she knows something about him. She said 'Eugen Courvoisier indeed!' and laughed in a *very* peculiar way."

"She is a fool. So are you if you let her talk to you about him."

"She is no fool, and I want to talk to no one but my own *Mädchen*," said he easily; "but when a woman is talking one can't stop one's ears."

Time passed. The concert with the Choral Symphony followed. Karl had had the happiness of presenting tickets to Fräulein Clara and her aunt, and of seeing them, in company with Miss Sartorius, enjoying looking at the dresses, and saying how loud the music was. His visits to Frau Steinmann continued.

"Friedel," he remarked abruptly one day to me, as we paced down the Casernenstrasse, "I wonder who Courvoisier is!"

"You have managed to exist very comfortably for three or four years without knowing."

"There is something *behind* all his secrecy about himself"

"Fräulein Sartorius says so, I suppose," I remarked dryly.

"N—no; she never *said* so; but I think she knows it is so."

"And what if it be so?"

"Oh, nothing! But I wonder what can have driven him here."

"*Driven* him here? His own choice, of course."

Karl laughed.

"*Nee, nee,* Friedel, not quite."

"I should advise you to let him and his affairs alone, unless you want a row with him. I would no more think of asking him than of cutting off my right hand."

"Asking him—*lieber Himmel!* no; but one may wonder—— It was a very queer thing his sending poor Sigmund off in that style. I wonder where he is."

"I don't know."

"Did he never tell you?"

"No."

"Queer!" said Karl reflectively. "I think there is something odd behind it all."

"Now listen, Karl. Do you *want* to have a row with Eugen? Are you anxious for him never to speak to you again?"

"*Herrgott,* no!"

"Then take my advice, and just keep your mouth shut. Don't listen to tales, and don't repeat them."

"But, my dear fellow, when there is a mystery about a man——"

"Mystery! Nonsense! What mystery is there in a man's choosing to have private affairs? *We* didn't behave in this idiotic manner when you were going on like a lunatic about Fräulein Clara. We simply assumed that as you didn't speak you had affairs which you chose to keep to yourself. Just apply the rule, or it may be worse for you."

"For all that, there is something *queer*," he said, as we turned into the Restauration for dinner.

Yet again, some days later, just before the last concert came off, Karl, talking to me, said, in a tone and with a look as if the idea troubled and haunted him:

"I say, Friedel, do you think that Courvoisier's being here is all square?"

"All square?" I repeated scornfully.

He nodded.

"Yes. Of course all has been right since he came here; but don't you think there may be something shady in the background?"

"What do you mean by 'shady'?" I asked, more annoyed than I cared to confess at his repeated returning to the subject.

"Well, you know there must be a *reason* for his being here——"

I burst into a fit of laughter, which was not so mirthful as it might seem.

"I should rather think there *must*. Isn't there a reason for every one being somewhere? Why am I here? Why are you here?"

"Yes; but this is quite a different thing. We are all agreed that whatever he may be now, he has not always been one of us, and I like things to be clear about people."

"It is a most extraordinary thing that you should only have felt the anxiety lately," said I witheringly, and then, after a moment's reflection, I said:

"Look here, Karl; no one could be more unwilling than I to pick a quarrel with you, but quarrel we must if this talking of Eugen behind his back goes on. It is nothing to either of us *what* his past has been. *I* want no references. If you want to gossip about him or any one else, go to the old women who are the natural exchangers of that commodity. Only if you mention it again to me it comes to a quarrel—*verstehst du?*"

"I meant no harm, and I can see no harm in it," said he.

"Very well; but I do. I hate it. So shake hands, and let there be an end of it. I wish now that I had spoken out at first. There's a dirtiness, to my mind, in the idea of speculating about a person with whom you are intimate, in a way that you wouldn't like him to hear."

"Well, if you will have it so," said he; but there was not the usual look of open satisfaction upon his face. He did not mention the subject to me again, but I caught him looking now and then earnestly at Eugen, as if he wished to ask him something. Then I knew that in my anxiety to avoid gossiping about the friend whose secrets were sacred to me, I had made a mistake. I ought to have made Karl

tell me whether he had heard anything specific about him or against him, and so judge the extent of the mischief done.

It needed but little thought on my part to refer Karl's suspicions and vague rumors to the agency of Anna Sartorius. Lately I had begun to observe this young lady more closely. She was a tall, dark, plain girl, with large, defiant-looking eyes, and a bitter mouth; when she smiled there was nothing genial in the smile. When she spoke, her voice had a certain harsh flavor; her laugh was hard and mocking—as if she laughed at, not with people. There was something rather striking in her appearance, but little pleasing. She looked at odds with the world, or with her lot in it, or with her present circumstances, or *something*. I was satisfied that she knew something of Eugen, though, when I once pointed her out to him and asked if he knew her, he glanced at her, and after a moment's look, as if he remembered, shook his head, saying:

"There is something a little familiar to me in her face, but I am sure I have never seen her—most assuredly never spoken to her."

Yet I had often seen her look at him long and earnestly, usually with a certain peculiar smile, and with her head a little to one side as if she examined some curiosity or *lusus naturæ*. I was too little curious myself to know Eugen's past, to speculate much about it; but I was quite sure that there was some link between him and that dark, bitter, sarcastic-looking girl, Anna Sartorius.

CHAPTER X

Didst thou, or didst thou not? Just tell me, friend.
Not that *my* conscience may be satisfied,
I never for a moment doubted thee—
But that I may have wherewithal in hand
To turn against them when they point at thee:
A whip to flog them with—a rock to crush—
Thy word—thy simple downright "No, I did not."
* * * * * *
Why! How!
What's this? He does not, will not speak. O God!
Nay, raise thy head, and look me in the eyes!
Canst not? What is this thing?

It was the last concert of the season and the end of April, when evenings were growing pleasantly long and the air balmy. Those last concerts, and the last nights of the opera, which closed at the end of April, until September, were always crowded. That night I remember we had Liszt's *Prometheus*, and a great violinist had been announced as coming to enrapture the audience with the performance of a Concerto of Beethoven's.

The concert was for the benefit of von Francius, and was probably the last one at which he would conduct us. He was leaving to assume the post of *Königlicher Musikdirektor* at ——. Now that the time came, there was not a man amongst us who was not heartily sorry to think of the parting.

Miss Wedderburn was one of the soloists that evening, and her sister and Mr. Arkwright were both there.

Karl Linders came on late. I saw that just before he



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appeared by the orchestra entrance, his beloved, her aunt, and Fräulein Sartorius had taken their places in the *Parquet.* Karl looked sullen and discontented, and utterly unlike himself. Anna Sartorius was half smiling. Lady Le Marchant, I noticed, passingly, looked the shadow of her former self.

Then von Francius came on; he too looked disturbed, for him very much so, and glanced round the orchestra and the room; and then coming up to Eugen, drew him a little aside, and seemed to put a question to him. The discussion, though carried on in low tones, was animated, and lasted some time. Von Francius appeared greatly to urge Courvoisier to something—the latter to resist. At last some understanding appeared to be come to. Von Francius returned to his estrade, Eugen to his seat, and the concert began.

The third piece on the list was the Violin Concerto, and when its turn came all eyes turned in all directions in search of ——, the celebrated, who was to perform it. Von Francius advanced and made a short enough announcement.

"*Meine Herrschaften,* I am sorry to say that I have received a telegram from Herr ——, saying that sudden illness prevents his playing to-night. I am sorry that you should be disappointed of hearing him, but I cannot regret that you should have an opportunity of listening to one who will be a very effectual substitute—Herr Concertmeister Courvoisier, your first violin."

He stepped back. Courvoisier rose. There was a dead

silence in the hall. Eugen stood in the well-known position of the prophet without honor, only that he had not yet begun to speak. The rest of the orchestra and von Francius were waiting to begin Beethoven's Concerto; but Eugen, lifting his voice, addressed them in his turn:

"I am sorry to say that I dare not venture upon the great Concerto; it is so long since I attempted it. I shall have pleasure in trying to play a *Chaconne*—one of the compositions of Herr von Francius."

Von Francius started up as if to forbid it. But Eugen had touched the right key. There was a round of applause, and then an expectant settling down to listen on the part of the audience, who were, perhaps, better pleased to hear von Francius the living and much discussed, than Beethoven the dead and undisputed.

It was a minor measure, and one unknown to the public, for it had not yet been published. Von Francius had lent Eugen the score a few days ago, and he had once or twice said to me that it was full not merely of talent; it was replete with the fire of genius.

And so, indeed, he proved to us that night. Never, before or since, from professional or private virtuoso, have I heard such playing as that. The work was in itself a fine one; original, strong, terse and racy, like him who had composed it. It was sad, very sad, but there was a magnificent elevation running all through it which raised it far above a mere complaint, gave a depth to its tragedy while it pointed at hope. And this, interpreted by Eugen, whose mood and whose inner life it seemed exactly

to suit, was a thing not to be forgotten in a lifetime. To me the scene and the sounds come freshly as if heard yesterday. I see the great hall full of people, attentive—more than attentive—every moment more enthralled. I see the pleased smile which had broken upon every face of his fellow-musicians at this chance of distinction, gradually subside into admiration and profound appreciation; I feel again the warm glow of joy which filled my own heart; I meet again May's eyes and see the light in them, and see von Francius shade his face with his hand to conceal the intensity of the artist's delight he felt at hearing his own creation so grandly, so passionately interpreted.

Then I see how it was all over, and Eugen, pale with the depth of emotion with which he had played the passionate music, retired, and there came a burst of enthusiastic applause—applause renewed again and again—it was a veritable *succès fou.*

But he would make no response to the plaudits. He remained obstinately seated, and there was no elation, but rather gloom upon his face. In vain von Francius besought him to come forward. He declined, and the calls at last ceased. It was the last piece on the first part of the programme. The people at last let him alone. But there could be no doubt that he had both roused a great interest in himself and stimulated the popularity of von Francius in no common degree. And at last he had to go down the orchestra steps to receive a great many congratulations, and go through several introductions, while I sat still and mentally rubbed my hands.

Meanwhile Karl Linders, with nearly all the other instrumentalists, had disappeared from the orchestra. I saw him appear again in the body of the hall, amongst all the people, who were standing up, laughing and discussing and roving about to talk to their friends. He had a long discussion with Fräulein Clara and Anna Sartorius.

And then I turned my attention to Eugen again, who, looking grave and unelated, released himself as soon as possible from his group of new acquaintance, and joined me.

Then von Francius brought Miss Wedderburn up the steps, and left her sitting near us. She turned to Eugen and said, "*Ich gratulire,*" to which he only bowed rather sadly. Her chair was quite close to ours, and von Francius stood talking to her. Others were quickly coming. One or two were around and behind us.

Eugen was tuning his violin, when a touch on the shoulder roused me. I looked up. Karl Linders stood there, leaning across me towards Eugen. Something in his face told me that *it*—that which had been hanging so long over us—was coming. His expression, too, attracted the attention of several other people—of all who were immediately around.

Those who heard Karl were myself, von Francius, Miss Wedderburn, and some two or three others, who had looked up as he came, and had paused to watch what was coming.

"Eugen," said he, "a foul lie has been told about you."

"So!"

"Of course I don't believe a word of it. I'm not such

a fool. But I have been challenged to confront you with it. It only needs a syllable on your side to crush it instantly; for I will take your word against all the rest of the world put together."

"Well?" said Eugen, whose face was white, and whose voice was low.

"A lady has said to me that you had a brother who had acted the part of father to you, and that you rewarded his kindness by forging his name for a sum of money, which you could have had for the asking; for he denied you nothing. It is almost too ridiculous to repeat, and I beg your pardon for doing it; but I was obliged. Will you give me a word of denial?"

Silence.

I looked at Eugen. We were all looking at him. Three things I looked for as equally likely for him to do; but he did none. He did not start up in indignant denial; he did not utter icily an icy word of contempt; he did not smile and ask Karl if he were out of his senses. He dropped his eyes, and maintained a deadly silence.

Karl was looking at him, and his candid face changed. Doubt, fear, dismay succeeded one another upon it. Then, in a lower and changed voice, as if first admitting the idea that caution might be necessary:

"*Um Gotteswillen*, Eugen! Speak!"

He looked up—so may look a dog that is being tortured—and my very heart sickened; but he did not speak.

A few moments—not half a minute—did we remain thus. It seemed a hundred years of slow agony. But dur-

ing that time I tried to comprehend that my friend of the bright, clear eyes, and open, fearless glance; the very soul and flower of honor; my ideal of almost Quixotic chivalrousness, stood with eyes that could not meet ours that hung upon him; face white, expression downcast, accused of a crime which came, if ever crime did, under the category "dirty," and not denying it!

Karl, the wretched beginner of the wretched scene, came nearer, took the other's hand, and, in a hoarse whisper, said:

"For God's sake, Eugen, speak! Deny it! You can deny it—you *must* deny it!"

He looked up at last, with a tortured gaze; looked at Karl, at me, at the faces around. His white lips quivered faintly. Silence yet. And yet it seemed to me that it was loathing that was most strongly depicted upon his face; the loathing of a man who is *obliged* to intimately examine some unclean thing; the loathing of one who has to drag a corpse about with him.

"Say it is a lie, Eugen!" Karl conjured him.

At last came speech; at last an answer; slow, low, tremulous, impossible to mistake or explain away.

"No; I cannot say so."

His head—that proud, high head—drooped again, as if he would fain avoid our eyes.

Karl raised himself. His face, too, was white. As if stricken with some mortal blow, he walked away. Some people who had surrounded us turned aside and began to whisper to each other behind their music. Von Francius

looked impenetrable; May Wedderburn white. The noise and bustle was still going on all around, louder than before. The drama had not taken three minutes to play out.

Eugen rested his brow for a moment on his hand, and his face was hidden. He looked up, rising as he did so, and his eyes met those of Miss Wedderburn. So sad, so deep a gaze I never saw. It was a sign to me, a significant one, that he *could* meet her eyes.

Then he turned to von Francius.

"Herr Direktor, Helfen will take my place, *nicht wahr?*"

Von Francius bowed. Eugen left his seat, made his way, without a word, from the orchestra, and von Francius rapping sharply, the preliminary tumult subsided; the concert recommenced.

I glanced once or twice towards Karl; I received no answering look. I could not even see his face; he had made himself as small as possible behind his music.

The concert over—and it seemed to me interminable—I was hastening away, anxious only to find Eugen, when Karl Linders stopped me in a retired corner, and holding me fast, said: "Friedel, I am a damned fool."

"I am sorry not to be able to contradict you."

"Listen," said he. "You must listen, or I shall follow you and make you. I made up my mind not to hear another word against him, but when I went to *die Clara* after the solo, I found her and that confounded girl whispering together. She—Anna Sartorius—said it was very fine for such scamps to cover their sins with music. I

asked her pretty stiffly what she meant, for she is always slanging Eugen, and I thought she might have let him alone for once. She said she meant that he was a blackguard—that's the word she used—*ein echter Spitzbube*—a forger, and worse. I told her I believed it was a lie. I did not believe it.

"'Ask him,' said she. I said I would be—something—first. But Clara would have nothing to say to me, and they both badgered me until for mere quietness I agreed to do as they wished."

He went on in distress for some time.

"Oh, drop it!" said I impatiently. "You have done the mischief. I don't want to listen to your whining over it. Go to the Fräulein Steinmann and Sartorius. They will confer the reward of merit upon you."

"*Gott behüte!*"

I shook myself loose from him and took my way home. It was with a feeling not far removed from tremulousness that I entered the room. That poor room formed a temple which I had no intention of desecrating.

He was sitting at the table when I entered, and looked at me absently. Then, with a smile in which sweetness and bitterness were strangely mingled, said:

"So! you have returned? I will not trouble you much longer. Give me houseroom for to-night. In the morning I shall be gone."

I went up to him, pushed the writing materials which lay before him away, and took his hands, but could not speak for ever so long.

"Well, Friedhelm," he asked, after a pause, during which the drawn and tense look upon his face relaxed somewhat, "what have you to say to the man who has let you think him honest for three years?"

"Whom I know, and ever have known, to be an honest man."

He laughed.

"There are degrees and grades even in honesty. One kind of honesty is lower than others. I am honest now because my sin has found me out, and I can't keep up appearances any longer."

"Pooh! do you suppose that deceives *me?*" said I contemptuously. "Me, who have known you for three years. That *would* be a joke, but one that no one will enjoy at my expense."

A momentary expression of pleasure unutterable flashed across his face and into his eyes, then was repressed, as he said:

"You must listen to reason. Have I not told you all along that my life had been spoiled by my own fault?—that I had disqualified myself to take any leading part amongst men?—that others might advance, but I should remain where I was? And have you not the answer to all here? You are a generous soul, I know, like few others. My keenest regret now is that I did not tell you long ago how things stood, but it would have cost me your friendship, and I have not too many things to make life sweet to me."

"Eugen, why did you not tell me before? I know the reason: for the very same reason which prevents you from

looking me in the eyes *now*, and saying, 'I am guilty. I did that of which I am accused,' because *it is not true*. I challenge you: meet my eyes, and say, 'I am guilty.'"

He looked at me; his eyes were dim with anguish. He said:

"Friedel, I—cannot tell you that I am innocent."

"I did not ask you to do so. I asked you to say you were guilty, and on your soul be it if you lie to me. That I could never forgive."

Again he looked at me, strove to speak, but no word came. I never removed my eyes from his: the pause grew long, till I dropped his hands and turned away with a smile.

"Let a hundred busybodies raise their clamoring tongues, they can never divide you and me. If it were not insulting I should ask you to believe that every feeling of mine for you is unchanged, and will remain so as long as I live."

"It is incredible. Such loyalty, such—Friedel, you are a fool!"

His voice broke.

"I wish you could have heard Miss Wedderburn sing her English song after you were gone. It was called 'What would you do, Love?' and she made us all cry."

"Ah, Miss Wedderburn! how delightful she is!"

"If it is any comfort to you to know, I can assure you that she thinks as I do. I am certain of it."

"Comfort—not much. It is only that *if* I ever allowed myself to fall in love again, which I shall not do, it would be with Miss Wedderburn."

The tone sufficiently told me that he was much in love with her already.

"She is bewitching," he added.

"If you do not mean to allow yourself to fall in love with her, I would not see too much of her," I remarked sententiously, "because it seems to me that 'allowing' is a matter for her to decide, not the men who happen to know her."

"I shall not see much more of her. I shall not remain here."

As this was what I had fully expected to hear I said nothing, but I thought of Miss Wedderburn, and grieved for her.

"Yes, I must go forth from hence," he pursued. "I suppose I ought to be satisfied that I have had three years here. I wonder if there is any way in which a man could kill all trace of his old self; a man who has every desire to lead henceforth a new life, and be at peace and charity with all men. I suppose not—no. I suppose the brand has to be carried about till the last; and how long it may be before that 'last' comes!"

I was silent. I had put a good face upon the matter and spoken bravely about it. I had told him that I did not believe him guilty—that my regard and respect were as high as ever, and I spoke the truth. Both before and since then he had told me that I had a bump of veneration, and one of belief, ludicrously out of proportion to the exigencies of the age in which I lived.

Be it so. Despite my cheerful words, and despite the

belief I did feel in him, I could not help seeing that he carried himself now as a marked man. The free, open look was gone; a blight had fallen upon him, and he withered under it. There was what the English call a "down" look upon his face, which had not been there formerly, even in those worst days when the parting from Sigmund was immediately before and behind us.

In the days which immediately followed the scene at the concert I noticed how he would set about things with a kind of hurried zeal, then suddenly stop and throw them aside, as if sick of them, and fall to brooding with head sunk upon his breast, and lowering brow; a state and a spectacle which caused me pain and misery not to be described. He would begin sudden conversations with me, starting with some question, as:

"Friedel, do you believe in a future state?"

"I do, and I don't. I mean to say that I don't know anything about it."

"Do you know what my idea of heaven would be?"

"Indeed I don't," said I, feebly endeavoring a feeble joke. "A place where all the fiddles are by Stradivarius and Guarnerius, and all the music comes up to Beethoven."

"No; but a place *where there are no mistakes.*"

"No mistakes?"

"*Ja wol!* Where it would not be possible for a man with fair chances to spoil his whole careêr by a single mistake. Or, if there were mistakes, I would arrange that the punishment should be in some proportion to them—not a large punishment for a little sin, and *vice versâ.*"

"Well, I should think that if there is any heaven there would *be* some arrangement of that kind."

"As for hell," he went on in a low, calm tone which I had learned to understand meant with him intense earnestness, "there are people who wonder that any one could invent a hell. *My* only wonder is why they should have resorted to fire and brimstone to enhance its terrors when they had the earth full of misery to choose from."

"You think this world a hell, Eugen?"

"Sometimes I think it the very nethermost hell of hells, and I think, if you had my feelings you would think so too. A poet, an English poet (you do not know the English poets as you ought, Friedhelm), has said that the fiercest of all hells is the failure in a great purpose. I used to think that a fine sentiment; now I sometimes wonder whether to a man who was once inclined to think well of himself it may not be a much fiercer trial to look back and find that he has failed to be commonly honest and upright. It is a nice little distinction—a moral wire-drawing which I would recommend to the romancers if I knew any."

Once and only once was Sigmund mentioned between us, and Eugen said:

"Nine years, were you speaking of? No—not in nineteen, nor in ninety-nine shall I ever see him again."

"Why?"

"The other night, and what occurred then, decided me. Till then I had some consolation in thinking that the blot might perhaps be wiped out—the shame lived down.

Now I see that that is a fallacy. With God's help I will never see him nor speak to him again. It is better that he should forget me."

His voice did not tremble as he said this, though I knew that the idea of being forgotten by Sigmund must be to him anguish of a refinement not to be measured by me.

I bided my time, saying nothing. I at least was too much engrossed with my own affairs to foresee the cloud then first dawning on the horizon, which they who looked towards France and Spain might perhaps perceive.

It had not come yet—the first crack of that thunder which rattled so long over our land, and when we saw the dingy old *Jäger Hof* at one end of the Hofgarten, and heard by chance the words Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, no premonition touched us. My mind was made up, that let Eugen go when and where he would, I would go with him.

I had no ties of duty, none of love or of ambition to separate me from him; his God should be my God, and his people my people; if the God were a jealous God dealing out wrath and terror, and the people should dwindle to outcasts and pariahs, it mattered not to me. I loved him.

CHAPTER XI

Nein, länger kann ich diesen Kampf nicht kämpfen,
Den Riesenkampf der Pflicht.
Kannst du des Herzens Flammentrieb nicht dämpfen,
So fordre, Tugend, dieses Opfer nicht.

Geschworen hab' ich's, ja, ich hab's geschworen,
Mich selbst zu bändigen.
Hier ist dein Kranz, er sei auf ewig mir verloren;
Nimm ihn zurück und lass mich sündigen."

SCHILLER.

IF I had never had a trouble before I had one now—large, stalwart, robust. For what seemed to me a long time there was present to my mind's eye little but the vision of a large, lighted room—a great undefined crowd surging around and below, a small knot of persons and faces in sharp distinctness immediately around me; low-spoken words with a question; no answer—vehement imploring for an answer—still no reply; yet another sentence conjuring denial, and then the answer itself—the silence that succeeded it; the face which had become part of my thoughts all changed and downcast—the man whom I had looked up to, feared, honored, as chivalrous far beyond his station and circumstances, slowly walking away from the company of his fellows, disgraced—fallen; having himself owned to the disgrace being merited, pointed at as a cheat—bowing to the accusation.

It drove me almost mad to think of it. I suffered the more keenly because I could speak to no one of what had happened. What sympathy should I get from any living

soul by explaining my sick looks and absent demeanor with the words, "I love that man who is disgraced"? I smiled dryly in the midst of my anguish, and locked it the deeper in my own breast.

I had believed in him so devotedly, so intensely, had loved him so entirely, and with such a humility, such a consciousness of my own shortcomings and of his superiority. The recoil at first was such as one might experience who embraces a veiled figure, presses his lips to where its lips should be, and finds that he kisses a corpse.

Such, I say, was the recoil at *first*. But a recoil, from its very nature, is short and vehement. There are some natures, I believe, which after a shock turn and flee from the shocking agent. Not so I. After figuratively springing back and pressing my hands over my eyes, I removed them again, and still saw his face, and—it tortured me to have to own it, but I had to do so—still loved that face beyond all earthly things.

It grew by degrees familiar to me again. I caught myself thinking of the past and smiling at the remembrance of the jokes between Eugen and Helfen on Carnival Monday, then pulled myself up with a feeling of horror, and the conviction that I had no business to be thinking of him at all. But I did think of him day by day and hour by hour, and tortured myself with thinking of him, and wished, yet dreaded, to see him, and wondered how I possibly could see him, and could only live on in a hope which was not fulfilled. For I had no right to seek him out. His condition might be much—very much to me.

My sympathy or pity or thought—as I felt all too keenly —could be nothing to him.

Meanwhile, as is usual in such cases, Circumstance composedly took my affairs into her hands and settled them for me without my being able to move a finger in the matter.

The time was approaching for the departure of von Francius. Adelaide and I did not exchange a syllable upon the subject. Of what use? I knew to a certain extent what was passing within her. I knew that this child of the world—were we not all children of the world, and not of light?—had braced her moral forces to meet the worst, and was awaiting it calmly.

Adelaide, like me, based her actions not upon religion. Religion was for both of us an utter abstraction; it touched us not. That which gave Adelaide force to withstand temptation, and to remain stoically in the drear sphere in which she already found herself, was not religion; it was pride on the one hand, and on the other love for Max von Francius.

Pride forbade her to forfeit her reputation, which was dear to her, though her position had lost the charms with which distance had once gilded it for her. Love for von Francius made her struggle with all the force of her nature to remain where she was, renounce him blamelessly rather than yield at the price which women must pay who do such things as leaving their husbands.

It was wonderful to me to see how love had developed in her every higher emotion. I remembered how cynical she

had always been as to the merits of her own sex. Women, according to her, were an inferior race, who gained their poor ends by poor means. She had never been hard upon female trickery and subterfuge. Bah! she said, how else are they to get what they want? But now with the exalted opinion of a man, had come exalted ideas as to the woman fit for his wife.

Since to go to him she must be stained and marked for ever, she would remain away from him. Never should any circumstance connected with him be made small or contemptible by any act of hers. I read the motive, and, reading it, read her.

Von Francius was, equally with herself, distinctly and emphatically a child of the world—as she honored him he honored her. He proved his strength and the innate nobility of his nature by his stoic abstinence from evasion of or rebellion against the decree which had gone out against their love. He was a better man, a greater artist, a more sympathetic nature now than before. His passage through the furnace had cleansed him. He was a standing example to me that despite what our preachers and our poets, our philosophers and our novelists are incessantly dinning into our ears, there are yet men who can renounce —men to whom honor and purity are still the highest goddesses.

I saw him, naturally, and often during these days—so dark for all of us. He spoke to me of his prospects in his new post. He asked me if I would write to him occasionally, even if it should only be three or four times in the year.

"Indeed I will, if you care to hear from me," said I much moved.

This was at our last music lesson, in my dark little room at the Wehrhahn. Von Francius had made it indeed a lesson, more than a lesson, a remembrance to carry with me for ever, for he had been playing Beethoven and Schubert to me.

"Fräulein May, everything concerning you and yours will *ever* be of the very deepest interest to me," he said, looking earnestly at me. "Take a few words of advice and information from one who has never felt anything for you since he first met you but the truest friendship. You have in you the materials of a great artist; whether you have the Spartan courage and perseverance requisite to attain the position, I can hardly tell. If you choose to become an artist, *eine vollkommene Künstlerin*, you must give everything else up—love and marriage and all that interferes with your art, for, *liebes Fräulein*, you cannot pursue two things at once."

"Then I have every chance of becoming as great an artist as possible," said I; "for none of those things will ever interfere with my pursuit of art."

"Wait till the time of probation comes; you are but eighteen yet," said he kindly, but sceptically.

"Herr von Francius"—the words started to my lips as the truth started into my mind, and fell from them in the strong desire to speak to *some* one of the matter that then filled my whole soul—"I can tell you the truth—you will understand—the time of probation has been—it is over—past. I am free for the future."

"So!" said he in a very low voice, and his eyes were filled, less with pity than with a fellow-feeling which made them "wondrous kind." "You, too, have suffered, and given up. There are then four people—you and I, and one whose name I will not speak, and—may I guess once, Fräulein May?"

I bowed.

"My first violinist, *nicht wahr?*"

Again I assented, silently. He went on:

"Fate is perverse about these things. And now, my fair pupil, you understand somewhat more that no true artist is possible without sorrow and suffering and *renunciation*. And you will think sometimes of your old, fault-finding, grumbling master—*ja?*"

"Oh, Herr von Francius!" cried I, laying my head upon the key-board of the piano, and sobbing aloud. "The kindest, best, most patient, gentle——"

I could say no more.

"That is mere nonsense, my dear May," he said, passing his hand over my prostrate head; and I felt that it—the strong hand—trembled.

"I want a promise from you. Will you sing for me next season?"

"If I am alive, and you send for me, I will."

"Thanks. And—one other word. Some one very dear to us both is very sad; she will become sadder. You, my child, have the power of allaying sadness, and soothing grief and bitterness in a remarkable degree. Will you expend some of that power upon her when her burden

grows very hard, and think that with each word of kindness to her you bind my heart more fast to yourself ?"

"I will—indeed I will."

"We will not say good-by, but only *Auf Wiedersehen !*" said he. "You and I shall meet again. I am sure of that. *Meine liebe, gute Schülerin*, adieu !"

Choked with tears, I passively let him raise my hand to his lips. I hid my face in my handkerchief, to repress my fast-flowing tears. I would not, because I dared not, look at him. The sight of his kind and trusted face would give me too much pain.

He loosed my hand. I heard steps; a door opened and closed. He was gone! My last lesson was over. My trusty friend had departed. He was to leave Elberthal on the following day.

* * * * *

The next night there was an entertainment—half concert, half theatricals, wholly dilettante—at the *Malkasten*, the Artists' Club. We, as is the duty of a decorous English family, buried all our private griefs, and appeared at the entertainment, to which, indeed, Adelaide had received a special invitation. I was going to remain with Adelaide until Sir Peter's return, which, we understood, was to be in the course of a few weeks, and then I was going to ——, by the advice of von Francius, there to finish my studies.

Dearly though I loved music, divine as she ever has been, and will be, to me, yet the idea of leaving von Francius for other masters had at first almost shaken my resolution to persevere. But, as I said, all this was taken

out of my hands by an irresistible concourse of circumstances, over which I had simply no control whatever.

Adelaide, Harry, and I went to the *Malkasten*. The gardens were gaily illuminated; there was a torchlight procession round the little artificial lake, and chorus-singing—merry choruses, such as *Wenn Zweie sich gut sind, sie finden den Weg*—which were cheered and laughed at. The fantastically-dressed artists and their friends were flitting, torch in hand, about the dark alleys under the great twisted acacias and elms, the former of which made the air voluptuous with their scent. Then we adjourned to the saal for the concert, and heard on all sides regrets about the absence of von Francius.

We sat out the first part of the festivities, which were to conclude with theatricals. During the pause we went again into the garden. The May evening was balmy and beautiful; no moonlight, but many stars, and the twinkling lights in the garden.

Adelaide and I had seated ourselves on a circular bench surrounding a big tree, which had the mighty word GOETHE cut deeply into its rugged bark. When the others began to return to the *Malkasten*, Adelaide, turning to Arkwright, said:

"Harry, will you go in and leave my sister and me here, that's a good boy? You can call for us when the play is over."

"All right, my lady," assented he amiably, and left us.

Presently Adelaide and I moved to another seat, near to a small table under a thick shade of trees. The pleasant,

cool evening air fanned our faces; all was still and peaceful. Not a soul but ourselves had remained out of doors. The still drama of the marching stars was less attractive than the amateur murdering of *Die Piccolomini* within. The tree-tops rustled softly over our heads. The lighted pond gleamed through the low-hanging boughs at the other end of the garden. A peal of laughter and a round of applause came wafted now and then from within. Ere long Adelaide's hand stole into mine, which closed over it, and we sat silent.

Then there came a voice. Some one—a complaisant *Dilettantin*—was singing Thekla's song. We heard the refrain—distance lent enchantment; it sounded what it really was, deep as eternity:

"*Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.*"

Adelaide moved uneasily; her hand started nervously, and a sigh broke from her lips.

"Schiller wrote from his heart," said she in a low voice.

"Indeed, yes, Adelaide."

"Did you say good-by to von Francius, May, yesterday?"

"Yes—at least, we said *au revoir*. He wants me to sing for him next winter."

"Was he very down?"

"Yes—very. He——"

A footstep close at hand. A figure passed in the uncertain light, dimly discerned us, paused, and glanced at us.

"Max!" exclaimed Adelaide in a low voice, full of surprise and emotion, as she half started up.

"It *is* you! That is too wonderful!" said he, pausing.

"You are not yet gone?"

"I have been detained to-day. I leave early to-morrow. I thought I would take one last turn in the Malkasten garden, which I may perhaps never see or enter again. I did not know you were here."

"We—May and I—thought it so pleasant that we would not go in again to listen to the play."

Von Francius had come under the trees and was now leaning against a massive trunk; his slight, tall figure almost lost against it; his arms folded, and an imposing calm upon his pale face, which was just caught by the gleam of a lamp outside the trees.

"Since this accidental meeting has taken place I may have the privilege of saying adieu to your ladyship."

"Yes—" said Adelaide in a strange, low, much-moved tone.

I felt uneasy; I was sorry this meeting had taken place. The shock and revulsion of feeling for Adelaide, after she had been securely calculating that von Francius was a hundred miles on his way to —— was too severe. I could tell from the very *timbre* of her voice and its faint vibration how agitated she was, and as she seated herself again beside me, I felt that she trembled like a reed.

"It is more happiness than I had expected," went on von Francius, and his voice too was agitated. Oh, if he would only say "Farewell," and go!

"Happiness!" echoed Adelaide in a tone whose wretchedness was too deep for tears.

"Ah! You correct me. Still it *is* a happiness; there are some kinds of joy which one cannot distinguish from griefs, my lady, until one comes to think that one might have been without them, and then one knows their real nature."

She clasped her hands. I saw her bosom rise and fall with long, stormy breaths.

I trembled for both; for Adelaide, whose emotion and anguish were, I saw, mastering her; for von Francius, because if Adelaide failed he must find it almost impossible to repulse her.

"Herr von Francius," said I in a quick, low voice, making one step towards him, and laying my hand upon his arm, "leave us! If you do love us," I added in a whisper, "leave us! Adelaide, say good-by to him—let him go!"

"You are right," said von Francius to me, before Adelaide had had time to speak; "you are quite right."

A pause. He stepped up to Adelaide. I dared not interfere. Their eyes met, and his will not to yield produced the same in her, in the shape of a passive, voiceless acquiescence in his proceedings. He took her hands, saying:

"My lady, adieu! Heaven send you peace, or death, which brings it, or—whatever is best."

Loosing her hands he turned to me, saying distinctly:

"As you are a woman, and her sister, do not forsake her now."

Then he was gone. She raised her arms and half fell against the trunk of the giant acacia beneath which we had been sitting; face forwards, as if drunk with misery.

Von Francius, strong and generous, whose very submission seemed to brace one to meet trouble with a calmer, firmer front, was gone. I raised my eyes, and did not even feel startled, only darkly certain that Adelaide's evil star was high in the heaven of her fate, when I saw, calmly regarding us, Sir Peter Le Marchant.

In another moment he stood beside his wife, smiling, and touched her shoulder: with a low cry she raised her face, shrinking away from him. She did not seem surprised either, and I do not think people often are surprised at the presence, however sudden and unexpected, of their evil genius. It is good luck which surprises the average human being.

"You give me a cold welcome, my lady," he remarked. "You are so overjoyed to see me, I suppose. Your carriage is waiting outside. I came in it, and Arkwright told me I should find you here. Suppose you come home. We shall be less disturbed there than in these public gardens."

Tone and words all convinced me that he had heard most of what had passed, and would oppress her with it hereafter.

The late scene had apparently stunned her. After the first recoil she said, scarcely audibly, "I am ready," and moved. He offered her his arm; she took it, turning to me and saying, "Come, May!"

"Excuse me," observed Sir Peter, "you are better

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alone. I am sorry I cannot second your invitation to my charming sister-in-law. I do not think you fit for *any* society—even hers."

"I cannot leave my sister, Sir Peter; she is not fit to be left," I found voice to say.

"She is not 'left,' as you say, my dear. She has her husband. She has *me*," said he.

Some few further words passed. I do not chronicle them. Sir Peter was as firm as a rock—that I was helpless before him is a matter of course. I saw my sister handed into her carriage; I saw Sir Peter follow her—the carriage drive away. I was left alone, half mad with terror at the idea of her state, to go home to my lodgings.

Sir Peter had heard the words of von Francius to me: "do not forsake her now," and had given himself the satisfaction of setting them aside as if they had been so much waste paper. Von Francius was, as I well knew, trying to derive comfort in this very moment from the fact that I at least was with her; I who loved them both, and would have laid down my life for them. Well! let him have the comfort! In the midst of my sorrow I rejoiced that he did not know the worst, and would not be likely to imagine for himself a terror grimmer than any feeling I had yet known.

CHAPTER XII

"Some say, 'A Queen discrowned,' and some call it 'Woman's shame.' Others name it 'A false step,' or 'social suicide,' just as it happens to strike their minds, or such understanding as they may be blessed with. In these days one rarely hears seriously mentioned such unruly words as 'Love,' or 'wretchedness,' or 'despair,' which may nevertheless be important factors in bringing about that result which stands out to the light of day for public inspection."

THE three days which I passed alone and in suspense were very terrible ones to me. I felt myself physically as well as mentally ill, and it was in vain that I tried to learn anything of or from Adelaide, and I waited in a kind of breathless eagerness for the end of it all, for I knew as well as if some one had shouted it aloud from the house-tops, that that farewell in the *Malkasten* garden was not the end.

Early one morning, when the birds were singing, and the sunshine streaming into the room, Frau Lützler came into the room and put a letter into my hand, which she said a messenger had left. I took it, and paused a moment before I opened it. I was unwilling to face what I knew was coming—and yet how otherwise could the whole story have ended?

"DEAR MAY,

"You, like me, have been suffering during these three days. I have been trying—yes, I *have* tried to believe I could bear this life, but it is too horrible. Isn't it possible that sometimes it may be right to do wrong? It is of no use telling you what has passed, but it is enough. I

believe I am only putting the crowning point to my husband's revenge when I leave him. He will be glad—he does not mind the disgrace for himself; and he can get another wife, as good as I, when he wants one. When you read this, or not long afterwards, I shall be with Max von Francius. I wrote to him—I asked him to save me, and he said 'Come!' It is not because I *want* to go, but I *must* go somewhere. I have made a great mess of my life. I believe everybody does make a mess of it who tries to arrange things for himself. Remember that, May.

"I wonder if we shall ever meet again. Not likely, when you are married to some respectable, conventional man, who will shield you from contamination with such as I. I must not write more or I shall write nonsense. Good-by, good-by, good-by! What will be the end of me! Think of me sometimes, and try not to think too hardly. Listen to your heart—not to what people say. Good-by again.

"ADELAIDE."

I received this stroke without groan or cry, tear or shiver. It struck home to me. The heavens were driven asunder—a flash came from them, descended upon my head, and left me desolate. I stood, I know not how long, stock-still, in the place where I had read that letter. In novels I had read of such things; they had had little meaning for me. In real life I had only heard them mentioned dimly and distantly, and here I was face to face with the awful thing, and so far from being able to deal out hearty, untempered condemnation, I found that the words of Adelaide's letter came to me like throes of a real heart. Bald, dry, disjointed sentences on the outside; without

feeling they might seem, but to me they were the breathless exclamations of a soul in supreme torture and peril. My sister! with what a passion of love my heart went out to her. Think of you, Adelaide, and think of you not too hardly? Oh, why did not you trust me more?

I saw her as she wrote those words, "I have made a great mess of it." To make a mess of one's life—one mistake after another, till what might have been at least honest, pure, and of good report, becomes a stained, limp, unsightly thing, at which men feel that they may gaze openly, and from which women turn away in scorn unutterable; and that Adelaide, my proudest of proud sisters, had come to this!

I was not thinking of what people would say. I was not wondering how it had come about; I was feeling Adelaide's words ever more and more acutely, till they seemed to stand out from the paper and turn into cries of anguish in my very ears. I put my hands to my ears: I could not bear those notes of despair.

"What will be the end of me?" she said, and I shook from head to foot as I repeated the question. If her will and that of von Francius ever came in contact. She had put herself at his mercy utterly: her whole future now depended upon the good pleasure of a man—and men were selfish.

With a faint cry of terror and foreboding, I felt everything whirl unsteadily around me: the letter fell from my hand; the icy band that had held me fast, gave way. All things faded before me, and I scarcely knew that I was sinking upon the floor. I thought I was dying; then thought faded with the consciousness that brings it.



CHAPTER XIII

"Allein, allein! und so soll ich genesen?
Allein, allein! und das des Schicksals Segen!
Allein, allein! O Gott, ein einzig Wesen,
Um dieses Haupt an seine Brust zu legen!"

I HAD a sharp, if not a long attack of illness, which left me weak, shaken, passive, so that I felt neither ability nor wish to resist those who took me into their hands. I re-

member being surprised at the goodness of every one towards me; astonished at Frau Lützler's gentle kindness, amazed at the unfailing goodness of Doctor Mittendorf and his wife, at that of the medical man who attended me in my illness. Yes, the world seemed full of kindness, full of kind people who were anxious to keep me in it, and who managed, in spite of my effort to leave it, to retain me.

Doctor Mittendorf, the oculist, had been my guardian angel. It was he who wrote to my friends and told them of my illness; it was he who went to meet Stella and Miss Hallam's Merrick, who came over to nurse me—and take me home. The fiat had gone forth. I was to go home. I made no resistance, but my very heart shrank away in fear and terror from the parting, till one day something happened which reconciled me to going home, or rather made me evenly and equally indifferent whether I went home, or stayed abroad, or lived, or died, or, in short, what became of me.

I sat one afternoon for the first time in an arm-chair opposite the window. It was June, and the sun streamed warmly and richly in. The room was scented with a bunch of wall-flowers and another of mignonette, which Stella had brought in that morning from the market. Stella was very kind to me, but in a superior, patronizing way. I had always felt deferentially backward before the superior abilities of both my sisters, but Stella quite overawed me by her decided opinions and calm way of setting me right upon all possible matters.

This afternoon she had gone out with Merrick to enjoy a little fresh air. I was left quite alone, with my hands in my lap, feeling very weak, and looking wistfully towards the well-remembered windows on the other side of the street.

They were wide open: I could see inside the room. No one was there—Friedhelm and Eugen had gone out, no doubt.

The door of my room opened, and Frau Lützler came in. She looked cautiously around, and then, having ascertained that I was not asleep, asked in a nerve-disturbing whisper if I had everything that I wanted.

"Everything, thank you, Frau Lützler," said I. "But come in! I want to speak to you. I am afraid I have given you no end of trouble."

"*Ach, ich bitte Sie,* Fräulein! Don't mention the trouble. We have managed to keep you alive."

How they all did rejoice in having won a victory over that gray-winged angel, Death! I thought to myself, with a curious sensation of wonder.

"You are very kind," I said, "and I want you to tell me something, Frau Lützler; how long have I been ill?"

"Fourteen days, Fräulein; little as you may think it."

"Indeed. I have heard nothing about any one in that time. Who has been made *Musikdirektor* in place of Herr von Francius?"

Frau Lützler folded her arms and composed herself to tell me a history.

"*Ja, Fräulein,* the post *would* have been offered to Herr

Courvoisier, only, you see, he has turned out a good-for-nothing. But perhaps you heard about that ?"

"Oh yes! I know all about it," I said hastily, as I passed my handkerchief over my mouth to hide the spasm of pain which contracted it.

"Of course, considering all that, *die Direktion* could not offer it to him, so they proposed it to Herr Helfen—you know Herr Helfen, Fräulein, *nicht?*"

I nodded.

"A good young man! a worthy young man, and so popular with his companions! *Aber denken Sie nur!* The authorities might have been offering him an insult instead of a good post. He refused it, then and there; would not stop to consider about it—in fact, he was quite angry about it. The gentleman who was chosen at last was a stranger, from Hanover."

"Herr Helfen refused it—why, do you know ?"

"They say, because he was so fond of Herr Courvoisier, and would not be set above him. It may be so. I know for a certainty that, so far from taking part against Herr Courvoisier, he would not even *believe* the story against him, though he could not deny it, and did not try to deny it. *Aber, Fräulein*—what hearts men must have! To have lived here three years, and let the world think him an honest man, when all the time he had *that* on his conscience! *Schrecklich!*"

Adelaide and Courvoisier, it seemed, might almost be pelted with the same stones.

"His wife, they say, died of grief at the disgrace——"

"Yes," said I, wincing. I could not bear this any longer, nor to discuss Courvoisier with Frau Lützler, and the words "his wife," uttered in that speculatively gossiping tone, repelled me. She turned the subject to Helfen again.

"Herr Helfen must indeed have loved his friend, for when Herr Courvoisier went away he went with him."

"Herr Courvoisier is gone?" I inquired, in a voice so like my usual one that I was surprised.

"Yes, certainly he is gone. I don't know where, I am sure."

"Perhaps they will return?"

Frau Lützler shook her head, and smiled slightly.

"*Nein, Fräulein!* Their places were filled immediately. They are gone—*für immer.*"

I tried to listen to her, tried to answer her as she went on giving her opinions upon men and things, but the effort collapsed suddenly. I had at last to turn my head away, and close my eyes, and in that weary, weary moment I prayed to God that He would let me die, and wondered again, and was almost angry with those who had nursed me, for having done their work so well. "We have managed to save you," Frau Lützler had said. Save me from what, and for what?

I knew the truth, as I sat there; it was quite too strong and too clear to be laid aside, or looked upon with doubtful eyes. I was fronted by a fact, humiliating or not—a fact which I could not deny.

It was bad enough to have fallen in love with a man

who had never showed me by word or sign that he cared for me, but exactly and pointedly the reverse: but now it seemed the man himself was bad too. Surely a well-regulated mind would have turned away from him—uninfluenced.

If so, then mine was an ill-regulated mind. I had loved him from the bottom of my heart: the world without him felt cold, empty and bare—desolate to live in, and shorn of its sweetest pleasures. He *had* influenced me; he influenced me yet—I still felt the words true:

> "The *greater* soul that draweth thee
> Hath left his shadow plain to see
> On thy fair face, Persephone!"

He had bewitched me: I did feel capable of "making a fool of myself" for his sake. I did feel that life by the side of any other man would be miserable, though never so richly set; and that life by his side would be full and complete though never so poor and sparing in its circumstances. I make no excuses, no apologies for this state of things. It simply was so.

Gone! and Friedhelm with him! I should probably never see either of them again. "I have made a mess of my life," Adelaide had said, and I felt that I might chant the same dirge. A fine ending to my boasted artistic career! I thought of how I had sat and chattered so aimlessly to Courvoisier in the cathedral at Köln, and had little known how large and how deep a shadow his influence was to cast over my life.

I still retained a habit of occasionally kneeling by my bedside and saying my prayers, and this night I felt the impulse to do so. I tried to thank God for my recovery. I said the Lord's Prayer: it is a universal petition and thanksgiving; it did not too nearly touch my woes; it allowed itself to be said, but when I came to something nearer, tried to say a thanksgiving for blessings and friends who yet remained, my heart refused, my tongue clave to my mouth. Alas! I was not regenerate. I could not thank God for what had happened. I found myself thinking of "the pity on't," and crying most bitterly till tears streamed through my folded fingers, and whispering, "Oh, if I could only have died while I was ill! no one would have missed me, and it would have been so *much* better for me!"

In the beginning of July, Stella, Merrick, and I returned to England, to Skernford, *home*. I parted in silent tears from my trusted friends, the Mittendorfs, who begged me to come and stay with them at some future day. The anguish of leaving Elberthal did not make itself fully felt at first—that remained to torment me at a future day. And soon after our return came printed in large type in all the newspapers, "Declaration of War between France and Germany." Mine was amongst the hearts which panted and beat with sickening terror in England while the dogs of war were fastened in deadly grip abroad.

My time at home was spent more with Miss Hallam than in my own home. I found her looking much older, much

feebler, and much more subdued than when she had been in Germany. She seemed to find some comfort from my society, and I was glad to devote myself to her. But for her I should never have known all those pains and pleasures which, bitter though their remembrance might be, were, and ever would be to me, the dearest thing of my life.

Miss Hallam seemed to know this; she once asked me, "Would I return to Germany if I could?"—"Yes," said I, "I would."

To say that I found life dull, even in Skernford, at *that* time, would be untrue. Miss Hallam was a furious partisan of the French, and I dared not mention the war to her, but I took in the *Daily News* from my private funds, and read it in my bedroom every night with dimmed eyes, fast-coming breath, and beating heart. I knew—knew well that Eugen must be fighting—unless he were dead. And I knew, too, by some intuition founded, I suppose, on many small negative evidences unheeded at the time, that he would fight, not like the other men who were battling for the sake of hearth and home, and sheer love and pride for Fatherland, but as one who has no home and no Fatherland, as one who seeks a grave, not as one who combats a wrong.

Stella saw the pile of newspapers in my room, and asked me how I could read those dreary accounts of battles and bombardments. Beyond these poor newspapers I had, during the sixteen months that I was at home, but scant tidings from without. I had implored Clara Steinmann to write to me now and then, and tell me news of Elber-

thal, but her penmanship was of the most modest and retiring description, and she was, too, so desperately excited about Karl as to be able to think of scarce anything else. Karl belonged to a *Landwehr* regiment which had not yet been called out, but to which that frightful contingency might happen any day; and what should she, Clara, do in that case? She told me no news; she lamented over the possibility of Karl's being summoned upon active service. It was, she said, *grausam, schrecklich!* It made her almost faint to write about it, and yet did she compose four whole pages in that condition. The barrack, she informed me, was turned into a hospital, and she and "Tante" both worked hard. There was much work—dreadful work to do—such poor groaning fellows to nurse! "*Herrgott!*" cried poor little Clara, "I did not know that the world was such a dreadful place!" Everything was so dear, so frightfully dear, and Karl—that was the burden of her song—might have to go into battle any day.

Also through the public papers I learned that Adelaide and Sir Peter Le Marchant were divided for ever. As to what happened afterwards I was for some time in uncertainty, longing most intensely to know, not daring to speak of it. Adelaide's name was the signal for a cold stare from Stella, and angry, indignant expostulation from Miss Hallam. To me it was a sorrowful spell which I carried in my heart of hearts.

One day I saw in a German musical periodical which I took in, this announcement: "Herr Musikdirektor Max

von Francius in —— has lately published a new Symphonie in B minor. The productions of this gifted composer are slowly but most surely making the mark which they deserve to leave in the musical history of our nation: he has, we believe, left —— for —— for a few weeks to join his lady (*seine Gemahlin*), who is one of the most active and valuable of the hospital nurses of that town, now, alas! little else than a hospital."

This paragraph set my heart beating wildly. Adelaide was then the wife of von Francius. My heart yearned from my solitude towards them both. Why did not they write? They knew how I loved them. Adelaide could not suppose that I looked upon her deed with the eyes of the world at large—with the eyes of Stella or of Miss Hallam. Had I not grieved with her? Had I not seen the dreadful struggle? Had I not proved the nobility of von Francius? On an impulse I seized pen and paper, and wrote to Adelaide, addressing my letter under cover to her husband at the town in which he was Musikdirektor. To him I also wrote only a few words—"Is your pupil forgotten by her master? he has never been forgotten by her."

At last an answer came. On the part of Adelaide it was short:

"DEAR MAY,

"I have had no time till now to answer your letter. I cannot reply to all your questions. You ask whether I repent what I have done. I repent my whole life. If I am happy—how can I be happy? I am busy now, and have many calls upon my time. My husband is very good:

he never interposes between me and my work. Shall I ever come to England again ?—never. Yours,

"A VON F."

No request to write again ! No inquiry after friends or relations ! This letter showed me that whatever *I* might feel to her—however my heart might beat and long, how warm soever the love I bore her, yet that Adelaide was now apart from me—divided in very thought. It was a cruel letter, but in my pain I could not but see that it had not been cruelly intended. Her nature had changed. But behind this pain lay comfort. On the back of the same sheet as that on which Adelaide's curt epistle was written, were some lines in the hand I knew well.

"LIEBE MAI" (they said),

"Forgive your master, who can never forget you, nor ever cease to love you. You suffer. I know it: I read it in those short, constrained lines, so unlike your spontaneous words and frank smile. My dear child, remember the storms that are beating on every side—over our country, in our hearts. Once I asked you to sing for me some time: you promised. When the war is over I shall remind you of your promise. At present, believe me, silence is best.

"Your old music-master,

"M. v. F."

Gall and honey, roses and thistles, a dagger at the heart and a caress upon the lips; such seemed to me the characters of the two letters on the same sheet which I held in my hand. Adelaide made my heart ache; von Francius made tears stream from my eyes. I reproached myself for having doubted him, but oh, I treasured the proof that he

was true! It was the one tangible link between me, reality, and hard facts, and the misty yet beloved life I had quitted. My heart was full to overflowing; I must tell some one—I must speak to some one.

Once again I tried to talk to Stella about Adelaide, but she gazed at me in that straight, strange way, and said coldly that she preferred not to speak of "that." I could not speak to Miss Hallam about it. Alone in the broad meadows, beside the noiseless river, I sometimes whispered to myself that I was not forgotten, and tried to console myself with the feeling that what von Francius promised he did—I should touch his hand, hear his voice again—and Adelaide's. For the rest, I had to lock the whole affair—my grief and my love, my longing and my anxiety, fast within my own breast, and did so.

It was a long lesson—a hard one; it was conned with bitter tears, wept long and alone in the darkness; it was a sorrow which lay down and rose up with me. It taught (or rather practised me until I became expert in them) certain things in which I had been deficient; reticence, self-reliance, a quicker ability to decide in emergencies. It certainly made me feel old and sad, and Miss Hallam often said that Stella and I were "as quiet as nuns."

Stella had the power which I so ardently coveted; she was a first-rate instrumentalist. The only topic she and I had in common was the music I had heard and taken part in. To anything concerning that she would listen for hours.

Meanwhile the war rolled on, and Paris capitulated, and peace was declared. The spring passed and Germany

laughed in glee, and bleeding France roused herself to look with a haggard eye around her; what she saw was, as we all know, desolation, and mourning, and woe. And summer glided by, and autumn came, and I did not write either to Adelaide or von Francius. I had a firm faith in him—an absolute trust. I felt I was not forgotten.

In less than a year after my return to England, Miss Hallam died. The day before her death she called me to her, and said words which moved me very much.

"May, I am an eccentric old woman, and lest you should be in any doubt upon the subject of my feelings towards you, I wish to tell you that my life has been more satisfactory to me ever since I knew you."

"That is much more praise than I deserve, Miss Hallam."

"No, it isn't. I like both you and Stella. Three months ago I made a codicil to my will by which I endeavored to express that liking. It is nothing very brilliant, but I fancy it will suit the views of both of you."

Utterly astounded, I stammered out some incoherent words.

"There, don't thank me," said she. "If I were not sure that I shall die to-morrow—or thereabouts, I should put my plan into execution at once, but I shall not be alive at the end of the week."

Her words proved true. Grim, sardonic, and cynical to the last, she died quietly, gladly closing her eyes which had so long been sightless. She was sixty-five years old, and had lived alone since she was five and twenty.

The codicil to her will, which she had spoken of with so

much composure, left three hundred pounds a year to Stella and me. She wished a portion of it to be devoted to our instruction in music, vocal and instrumental, at any German *Conservatorium* we might select. She preferred that of L——. Until we were of age, our parents or guardians saw to the dispensing of the money, after that it was our own—half belonging to each of us; we might either unite our funds or use them separately as we chose.

It need scarcely be said that we both chose that course which she had indicated. Stella's joy was deep and intense—mine had an unavoidable sorrow mingled with it. At the end of September, 18—, we departed for Germany, and before going to L—— it was agreed that we should pay a visit, at Elberthal, to my friend Doctor Mittendorf.

It was a gusty September night, with wind dashing angrily about and showers of rain flying before the gale, on which I once again set foot in Elberthal—the place I had thought never more to see.



BOOK II

ROTHENFELS

CHAPTER I

" Freude trinken alle wesen
An den Brüsten der Natur ;
Alle Guten, alle Bösen
Folgen ihrer Rosenspur."

I FELT a deep rapture in being once more in that land where my love, if he did not live, slept. But I forbear to dwell on that rapture, much as it influenced me. It waxes tedious when put into words—loses color and flavor, like a pressed flower.

I was at first bitterly disappointed to find that Stella and I were only to have a few days in Elberthal. Doctor Mittendorf no longer lived there, but only had his official residence in the town, going every week-end to his country house, or " Schloss," as he ambitiously called it, at Lahnburg, a four hours' railway journey from Elberthal.

Frau Mittendorf, who had been at Elberthal on a visit, was to take Stella and me with her to Lahnburg on the Tuesday morning after our arrival, which was on a Friday evening.

The good Doctor's Schloss, an erection built like the contrivances of the White Knight in "Through the Looking Glass," on "a plan of his own invention," had been his pet hobby for years, and now that it was finished, he invited every invitable person to come and stay at it.

It was not likely that he would excuse a person for whom he had so much regard as he professed for me, from the honor, and I was fain to conceal the fact that I would much rather have remained in Elberthal, and make up my mind to endure as well as I could the prospect of being buried in the country with Frau Mittendorf and her children.

* * * * *

It was Sunday afternoon. An equinoctial gale was raging, or rather had been raging all day. It had rained incessantly, and the wind had howled. The skies were cloud-laden, the wind was furious. The Rhine was so swollen that the streets in the lower part of the town sloping to the river were under water, and the people going about in boats.

But I was tired of the house; the heated rooms stifled me. I was weary of Frau Mittendorf's society, and thoroughly dissatisfied with my own.

About five in the afternoon I went to the window and looked out. I perceived a strip of pale, watery blue through a rift in the storm-laden clouds, and I chose to see that, and that only, ignoring the wind-lashed trees of the Allée; the leaves, wet and sodden and sear, hurrying panic-stricken before the gale, ignoring, too, the low wail

promising a coming hurricane, which sighed and soughed beneath the wind's shrill scream.

There was a temporary calm, and I bethought myself that I would go to church—*not* to the Protestant church attended by the English clique—heaven forbid! but to my favorite haunt, the *Jesuiten-Kirche*.

It was just the hour at which service would be going on. I asked Stella in a low voice if she would not like to come; she declined with a look of pity at me, so, notifying my intention to Frau Mittendorf, and mildly but firmly leaving the room before she could utter any remonstrance, I rushed upstairs, clothed myself in my winter mantle, threw a shawl over my arm, and set out.

The air was raw, but fresh; life-giving and invigorating. The smell of the stove, which clung to me still, was quickly dissipated by it. I wrapped my shawl around me, turned down a side street, and was soon in the heart of the old part of the town, where all the Roman Catholic churches were, the quarter lying near the river and wharves, and bridge of boats.

I liked to go to the *Jesuiten-Kirche*, and placing myself in the background, kneel as the others knelt, and without taking part in the service, think my own thoughts and pray my own prayers.

Here none of the sheep looked wolfish at you unless you kept to a particular pen, for the privilege of sitting in which you paid so many marks *per quartal* to a respectable functionary, who came to collect them. Here the men came and knelt down, cap in hand, and the women seemed

really to be praying, and aware of what they were praying for, not looking over their prayer-books at each other's clothes.

I entered the church. Within the building it was already almost dark. A reddish light burnt in a great glittering censer, which swung gently to and fro in the chancel.

There were many people in the church, kneeling in groups and rows, and all occupied with their prayers. I, too, knelt down, and presently as the rest sat up I sat up too. A sad-looking monk had ascended the pulpit, and was beginning to preach. His face was thin, hollow, and ascetic-looking; his eyes blazed bright from deep, sunken sockets. His cowl came almost up to his ears. I could dimly see the white cord round his waist as he began to preach, at first in a low and feeble voice, which gradually waxed into power.

He was in earnest—whether right or wrong he was in earnest. I listened with the others to what he said. He preached the beauties of renunciation, and during his discourse quoted the very words which had so often haunted me—*Entbehren sollst du! sollst entbehren!*

His earnestness moved me deeply. His voice was musical, sweet. His accent made the German burr soft; he was half Italian. I had been at the Instrumental Concert the previous night, for old associations' sake, and they had played the two movements of Schubert's unfinished Symphony—the B Minor. The refrain in the last movement haunted me—a refrain of seven cadences,



which rises softly and falls, dies away, is carried softly from one instrument to another, wanders afar, returns again, sinks lower and lower, deeper and deeper, till at last the *Celli* (if I mistake not) take it up for the last time, and the melody dies a beautiful death, leaving you undecided whether to weep or smile, but penetrated through and through with its dreamy loveliness.

This exquisite refrain lingered in my memory and echoed in my mind, like a voice from some heavenly height, telling me to rest and be at peace, in time to the swinging of the censer, in harmony with the musical southern voice of that unknown Brother Somebody.

By degrees I began to think that the censer did not sway so regularly, so like a measured pendulum as it had done, but was moving somewhat erratically, and borne upon the gale came a low, ominous murmur, which first mingled itself with the voice of the preacher, and then threatened to dominate it. Still the refrain of the Symphony rang in my ears, and I was soothed to rest by the inimitable nepenthe of music.

But the murmur of which I had so long been, as it were, half-conscious, swelled, and drove other sounds and the thoughts of them from my mind. It grew to a deep, hollow roar—a very hurricane of a roar. The preacher's voice ceased, drowned.

I think none of us were at first certain about what was happening; we only felt that something tremendous was going on. Then, with one mighty bang and blow of the tempest, the door by which I had entered the church was

blown bodily in, and fell crashing upon the floor; and after that the hurricane came rushing through the church with the howl of a triumphant demon, and hurried round the building, extinguishing every light, and turning a temple of God into Hades.

Sounds there were as of things flapping from the walls, as of wood falling; but all was in pitchiest darkness—a very "darkness which might be felt." Amid the roar of the wind came disjointed, broken exclamations of terrified women and angry, impatient men. "*Ach Gott!*" "*Mein Himmel!*" "*Herr du meine Güte!*" "*Oh je!*" etc., rang all round, and hurrying people rushed past me, making confusion worse confounded, as they scrambled past to try and get out.

I stood still, not from any bravery or presence of mind, but rather from the utter annihilation of both qualities in the shock and the surprise of it all. At last I began trying to grope my way towards the door. I found it. Some people—I heard and felt rather than saw—were standing about the battered-in door, and there was the sound of water hurrying past the doorway. The Rhine was rushing down the street.

"We must go to the other door—the west door," said some one amongst the people; and as the group moved I moved too, beginning to wish myself well out of it.

We reached the west door; it led into a small lane or *Gasse*, regarding the geography of which I was quite at sea, for I had only been in it about once before. I stepped from the street into the lane, which was in the

very blackness of darkness, and seemed to be filled with a wind and a hurricane which one could almost distinguish and grasp.

The roar of wind and the surging of water were all around, and were deafening. I followed, as I thought, some voices which I heard, but scarcely knew where I was going, as the wind seemed to be blowing all ways at once, and there came to me an echo here and an echo there, misleading rather than guiding. In a few moments I felt my foot upon wood, and there was a loud creaking and rattling, as of chains, a groaning, splitting, and great uproar going on, as well as a motion as if I were on board a ship.

After making a few steps I paused. It was utterly impossible that I could have got upon a boat—wildly impossible. I stood still, then went on a few steps. Still the same extraordinary sounds—still such a creaking and groaning—still the rush, rush, and swish, swish of water; but not a human voice any more, not a light to be seen, not a sign!

With my hat long since stripped from my head and launched into darkness and space, my hair lashed about me in all directions, my petticoats twisted round me like ropes, I was utterly and completely bewildered by the thunder and roar of all around. I no longer knew which way I had come nor where to turn. I could not imagine where I was, and my only chance seemed to be to hold fast and firm to the railing against which the wind had unceremoniously banged me.

The creaking grew louder—grew into a crash; there was



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a splitting of wood, a snapping of chains, a kind of whirl, and then I felt the wind blow upon me, first from this side, then from that, and became conscious that the structure upon which I stood was moving—floating smoothly and rapidly upon water. In an instant (when it was too late) it all flashed upon my mind. I had wandered upon the *Schiffbrücke*, or bridge of boats which crossed the Rhine from the foot of the market-place, and this same bridge had been broken by the strength of the water and wind, and upon a portion of it I was now floating down the river.

With my usual wisdom, and "the shrewd application of a wide experience so peculiar to yourself," as some one has since insulted me by saying, I instantly gave myself up as lost. This bridge would run into some other bridge, or dash into a steamer, or do something horrible, and I should be killed, and none would know my fate; or it would all break into little pieces, and I should have to cling to one of them, and should inevitably be drowned.

In any case, my destruction was only a matter of time. How I loved my life then! How sweet, and warm, and full, and fresh it seemed! How cold the river, and how undesirable a speedy release from the pomps and vanities of this wicked world!

The wind was still howling horribly—chanting my funeral dirge. Like grim death, I held on to my railing, and longed with a desperate longing, for one glimpse of light.

I had believed myself alone upon my impromptu raft—or rather, it had not occurred to me that there might be

another than myself upon it; but at this instant, in a momentary lull of the wind, almost by my side I heard a sound that I knew well, and had cause to remember—the tune of the wild March from *Lenore*, set to the same words, sung by the same voice as of yore.

My heart stood still for a moment, then leaped on again. Then a faint, sickly kind of dread overcame me. I thought I was going out of my mind—was wandering in some delusion, which took the form of the dearest voice, and sounded with its sound in my ears.

But no. The melody did not cease. As the beating of my heart somewhat settled down, I still heard it—not loud, but distinct. Then the tune ceased. The voice—ah! there was no mistaking *that*, and I trembled with the joy that thrilled me as I heard it—conned over the words as if struck with their weird appropriateness to the scene, which was certainly marked:

> "Und das Gesindel, husch, husch, husch!
> Kam hinten nachgeprasselt—
> Wie Wirbelwind am Haselbusch
> Durch dürre Blätter rasselt."

And *Wirbelwind*, the whirlwind, played a wild accompaniment to the words.

It seemed to me that a long time passed, during which I could not speak, but could only stand with my hands clasped over my heart, trying to steady its tumultuous beating. I had not been wrong, thank the good God above! I had not been wrong when my heart sang for

joy at being once more in this land. He was here—he was living—he was safe.

Here were all my worst fears soothed—my intensest longings answered without my having spoken. It was now first that I really knew how much I loved him—so much, that I felt almost afraid of the strength of the passion. I knew not till now how it had grown—how vast and all-dominating it had become.

A sob broke from my lips, and his voice was silenced.

"Herr Courvoisier!" I stammered.

"Who spoke?" he asked, in a clear voice.

"It *is* you!" I murmured.

"May!" he uttered, and paused abruptly.

A hand touched mine—warm, firm, strong—his very hand. In its lightest touch there seemed safety, shelter, comfort.

"Oh, how glad I am! how glad I am!" I sobbed.

He murmured "*Sonderbar!*" as if arguing with himself, and I held his hand fast.

"Don't leave me! Stay here!" I implored.

"I suppose there is not much choice about that for either of us," said he, and he laughed.

I did not remember to wonder how he came there; I only knew he *was* there. That tempest, which will not soon be forgotten in Elberthal, subsided almost as rapidly as it had arisen. The winds lulled as if a wizard had bidden them be still. The gale hurried on to devastate fresh fields and pastures new. There was a sudden reaction of stillness, and I began to see in the darkness the

outlines of a figure beside me. I looked up. There was no longer that hideous, driving black mist, like chaos embodied, between me and heaven. The sky, though dark, was clear; some stars were gleaming coldly down upon the havoc which had taken place since they last viewed the scene.

Seeing the heavens so calm and serene, a sudden feeling of shyness and terror overtook me. I tried to withdraw my hand from that of my companion, and to remove myself a little from him. He held my hand fast.

"You are exhausted with standing?" said he. "Sit down upon this ledge."

"If you will too."

"Oh, of course. I think our voyage will be a long one, and——"

"Speak German! said I. "Let me hear you speaking it again."

"And I have no mind to stand all the time," he concluded in his own tongue.

"Is there no one else here but ourselves."

"No one."

I had seated myself and he placed himself beside me. I was in no laughing mood or I might have found something ludicrous in our situation.

"I wonder where we are now," I half whispered, as the bridge was still hurried ceaselessly down the dark and rushing river. I *dared* not allude to anything else. I felt my heart too full—I felt too, too utterly uncertain of him. There was sadness in his voice. I, who knew its every cadence, could hear that.

"I think we are about passing Kaiserswerth," said he. "I wonder where we shall land at last?"

"Do you think we shall go very far?"

"Perhaps we may. It is on record that the Elberthal Boat Bridge—part of it, I mean—once turned up at Rotterdam. It may happen again, why not?"

"How long does that take?"

"Twelve or fourteen hours, I dare say."

I was silent.

"I am sorry for you," he said in the gentlest of voices, as he wrapped my shawl more closely around me. "And you are cold too—shivering. My coat must do duty again."

"No, *no!*" cried I. "Keep it! I won't have it."

"Yes, you will, because you can't help it if I make you," he answered as he wrapped it round me.

"Well, please take part of it. At least wrap half of it round you," I implored, "or I shall be so miserable."

"Pray don't. No, keep it! It is like charity—it has not room for many sins at once."

"Do you mean you or me?" I could not help asking.

"Are we not all sinners?"

I knew it would be futile to resist, but I was not happy in the new arrangement, and I touched his coat-sleeve timidly.

"You have quite a thin coat," I remonstrated, "and I have a winter dress, a thick jacket, and a shawl."

"And my coat, *und doch bist du*—oh, pardon! and you shivering in spite of it," said he conclusively.

"It is an awful storm, is it not?" I suggested next.

"*Was* an awful storm, *nicht wahr?* Yes. And how very strange that you and I, of all people, should have met here, of all places. How did you get here?"

"I had been to church."

"So! I had not."

"How did *you* come here?" I ventured to ask.

"Yes—you may well ask; but first—you have been in England, have you not?"

"Yes, and am going back again."

"Well—I came here yesterday from Berlin. When the war was over——"

"Ah, you were in the war?" I gasped.

"*Natürlich, mein Fräulein.* Where else should I have been?"

"And you fought?"

"Also *natürlich.*"

"Where did you fight. At Sedan?"

"At Sedan—yes."

"Oh, my God!" I whispered to myself. "And were you wounded?" I added aloud.

"A mere trifle. Friedhelm and I had the luck to march side by side. I learnt to know in spirit and in letter the meaning of: *Ich hatt' einen guten Cameraden.*"

"You were wounded!" I repeated, unheeding all that discursiveness. "Where? How? Were you in hospital?"

"Yes. Oh, it is nothing. Since then I have been learning my true place in the world, for you see, unluckily, I was not killed."

"Thank God! Thank God! How I have wondered! How I have thought—well, how did you come here?"

"I *coveted* a place in one of those graves, and couldn't have it," he said bitterly. "It was a little thing to be denied, but fallen men must do without much. I saw boys falling around me, whose mothers and sisters are mourning for them yet."

"Oh, don't."

"Well—Friedel and I are working in Berlin. We shall not stay there long; we are wanderers now! There is no room for us. I have a short holiday, and I came to spend it at Elberthal. This evening I set out, intending to hear the opera—*Der fliegende Holländer*—very appropriate, wasn't it?"

"Very!"

"But the storm burst over the theatre just as the performance was about to begin, and removed part of the roof, upon which one of the company came before the curtain and dismissed us with his blessing and the announcement that no play would be played to-night. Thus I was deprived of the ungodly pleasure of watching my old companions wrestling with Wagner's stormy music while I looked on like a gentleman."

He laughed again—a harsh laugh, utterly unlike the old sweet tones—a laugh that roused all my fears to renewed strength.

"But when you came out of the theatre?"

"When I came out of the theatre the storm was so magnificent, and was telling me so much, that I resolved to

come down to its centre-point and see *Vater Rhein* in one of his grandest furies. I strayed upon the bridge of boats; forgot where I was, listened only to the storm; ere I knew what was happening I was adrift and the tempest howling round me—and you, fresh from your devotions to lull it."

"Are you going to stay long in Elberthal?"

"It seems I may not. I am driven away by storms and tempests."

"And me with you," thought I. "Perhaps there is some meaning in this. Perhaps Fate means us to breast other storms together. If so, I am ready—anything—so it be *with you*."

"There's the moon," said he; "how brilliant, is she not?"

I looked up into the sky wherein she had indeed appeared "like a dying lady, lean and pale," shining cold and drear, but very clearly upon the swollen waters, showing us dim outlines of half-submerged trees, cottages and hedges—showing us that we were in mid-stream, and that other pieces of wreck were floating down the river with us, hurrying rapidly with the current—showing me, too, in a ghostly whiteness, the face of my companion turned towards me, as his elbow rested on his knee and his chin in his hand, and his loose dark hair was blown back from his broad forehead; his strange, deep eyes were resting upon my face, calmly, openly.

Under that gaze my heart fell. In former days there had been in his face something not unakin to this stormy, free night; but now it was changed—*how* changed!

A year had wrought a terrible alteration. I knew not his past; but I did know that he had long been struggling, and a dread fear seized me that the struggle was growing too hard for him—his spirit was breaking. It was not only that the shadows were broader, deeper, more permanently sealed—there was a *down* look—a hardness and bitterness which inspired me both with pity and fear.

"Your fate is a perverse one," he remarked, as I did not speak.

"So! Why?"

"It throws you so provokingly into society which must be unpleasant to you."

"Whose society?"

"Mine, naturally."

"You are much mistaken," said I composedly.

"It is kind of you to say so. For your sake, I wish it had been any one but myself who had been thus thrown together with you. I promise you faithfully that as soon as ever we can land I will only wait to see you safely into a train and then I will leave you and——"

He was suddenly silenced. I had composed my face to an expression of indifference as stony as I knew how to assume, and with my hands folded in my lap, had steeled myself to look into his face and listen to him.

I could find nothing but a kind of careless mockery in his face—a hard half-smile upon his lips as he went on saying the hard things which cut home and left me quivering, and which he yet uttered as if they had been the most harmless pleasantries or the merest whipped-cream compliments.

It was at this moment that the wind, rising again in a brief spasm, blew a tress of my loosened hair across his face. How it changed! flushed crimson. His lips parted —a strange, sudden light came into his eyes.

"I beg your pardon!" said I hastily, startled from my assumed composure, as I raised my hand to push my hair back. But he had gathered the tress together—his hand lingered for one moment—a scarcely perceptible moment —upon it, then he laid it gently down upon my shoulder.

"Then I will leave you," he went on, resuming the old manner, but with evident effort, "and not interfere with you any more."

What was I to think? What to believe? I thought to myself that had he been my lover and I had intercepted such a glance of his to another woman my peace of mind had been gone for evermore. But, on the other hand, every cool word he said gave the lie to his looks—or did his looks give the lie to his words? Oh that I could solve the problem once for all, and have done with it for ever!

"And you, Miss Wedderburn—have you deserted Germany?"

"I have been obliged to live in England, if that is what you mean—I am living in Germany at present."

"And Art—*die Kunst*—that is cruel!"

"You are amusing yourself at my expense, as you have always delighted in doing," said I sharply, cut to the quick.

"*Aber, Fräulein May!* What do you mean?"

"From the very first," I repeated, the pain I felt giv-

ing a keenness to my reproaches. "Did you not deceive me and draw me out for your amusement that day we met at Köln? You found out then, I suppose, what a stupid, silly creature I was, and you have repeated the process now and then, since—much to your own edification and that of Herr Helfen, I do not doubt. Whether it was just, or honorable, or *kind*, is a secondary consideration. Stupid people are only invented for the amusement of those who are not stupid."

"How dare you, how *dare* you talk in that manner?" said he emphatically, laying his hand upon my shoulder, and somehow compelling my gaze to meet his. "But I know why—I read the answer in those eyes which dare everything, and yet——"

"Not quite everything," thought I uncomfortably, as the said eyes sank beneath his look.

"Fräulein May, will you have the patience to listen while I tell you a little story?"

"Oh yes!" I responded readily, as I hailed the prospect of learning something more about him.

"It is now nearly five years since I first came to Elberthal. I had never been in the town before. I came with my boy—may God bless him and keep him!—who was then two years old, and whose mother was dead—for my wife died early."

A pause, during which I did not speak. It was something so wonderful to me that he should speak to me of his wife.

"She was young—and very beautiful," said he. "You will forgive my introducing the subject?"

"Oh, Herr Courvoisier!"

"And I had wronged her. I came to Friedhelm Helfen, or rather was sent to him, and, as it happened, found such a friend as is not granted to one man in a thousand. When I came here, I was smarting under various griefs; about the worst was that I had recklessly destroyed my own prospects. I had a good career—a fair future open to me. I had cut short that career, annihilated that future, or any future worth speaking of, by—well, something had happened which divided me utterly and uncompromisingly and *for ever* from the friends, and the sphere, and the respect and affection of those who had been parents and brother and sister to me. *Then* I knew that their good opinion, their *love*, was my law and my highest desire. And it was not their fault—it was mine—my very own.

"The more I look back upon it all, the more I see that I have myself to thank for it. But that reflection, as you may suppose, does not add to the delights of a man's position when he is humbled to the dust as I was then. Biting the dust—you have that phrase in English. Well, I have been biting the dust—yes, eating it, living upon it, and deservedly so, for five years; but nothing ever can, nothing ever will, make it taste anything but dry, bitter, nauseating to the last degree."

"Go on!" said I breathlessly.

"How kind you are to listen to the dull tale! Well, I had my boy Sigmund, and there were times when the mere fact that he was mine made me forget everything else, and thank my fate for the simple fact that I lived and

was his father. His father—he was a part of myself, he could divine my every thought. But at other times, generally indeed, I was sick of life—*that* life. Don't suppose that I am one of those high-flown idiots who would make it out that no life is worth living: I knew and felt to my soul that the life from which I had locked myself out and then dropped the key as it were here in mid-stream, was a glorious life, worth living ten times over.

"There was the sting of it. For three years I lived thus, and learnt a great deal, learnt what men in that position are—learnt to respect, admire, and love some of them—learnt to understand that man—*der Mensch*—is the same, and equally to be honored everywhere. I also tried to grow accustomed to the thought, which grew every day more certain to me, that I must live on so for the future—to plan my life, and shape out a certain kind of repentance for sins past. I decided that the only form my atonement could take was that of self-effacement——"

"That is why you never would take the lead in anything."

"Exactly. I am naturally fond of leading. I love beyond everything to lead those who I know like me, and like following me. When I was *Haupt*—I mean, I knew that all that bygone mischief had arisen from doing what I *liked*, so I dropped doing what I liked, and began to do what I disliked. By the time I had begun to get a little into training, three years had passed—these things are not accomplished in a day, and the effects of twenty-seven years of selfishness are not killed soon. I *was* killing them, and becoming a machine in the process.

"One year the Lower Rhenish *Musikfest* was to be held at Köln. Long before it came off the Cologne orchestra had sent to us for contingents, and we had begun to attend some of the *Proben* regularly once or twice a week.

"One day Friedhelm and I had been at a Probe. The *Tower of Babel* and the *Lenore* Symphony were amongst the things we had practised. Both of them, the *Lenore* particularly, had got into my head. I broke loose for one day from routine, from drudgery and harness. It *was* a mistake. Friedhelm went off, shrugging his dear old shoulders, and I at last turned up, mooning at the Kölner *Bahnhof*. Well—you know the rest. Nay, do not turn so angrily away. Try to forgive a fallen man one little indiscretion. When I saw you I cannot tell what feeling stole warm and invigorating into my heart; it was something quite new—something I had never felt before: it was so sweet that I could not part with it. Fräulein May, I have lived that afternoon over again many and many a time. Have *you* ever given a thought to it?"

"Yes, I have," said I dryly.

"My conduct after that arose half from pride—wounded pride, I mean, for when you cut me, it *did* cut me—I own it. Partly it arose from a worthier feeling—the feeling that I could not see very much of you or learn to know you at all well without falling very deeply in love with you. You hide your face—you are angry at that——"

"Stop! Did you never throughout all this give a thought to the possibility that *I* might fall in love with *you?*"

I did not look at him, but he said, after a pause:

"I *had* the feeling that if I tried I could win your love. I never was such a presumptuous fool as to suppose that you would love me unasked—or even with much asking on my part—*bewahre!*"

I was silent, still concealing my face. He went on:

"Besides, I knew that you were an English lady. I asked myself what was the right thing to do, and I decided that though you would consider me an ill-mannered, churlish clown, I would refuse those gracious, charming advances which you in your charity made. Our paths in life were destined to be utterly apart and divided, and what could it matter to *you*—the behavior of an insignificant fiddler? You would forget him just when he deserved to be forgotten, that is—instantly.

"Time went on. You lived near us. Changes took place. Those who had a right to arbitrate for me, since I had by my own deed deprived myself of that right, wrote to me and demanded my son. I had shown myself incapable of managing my own affairs—was it likely that I could arrange his? And then he was better away from such a black sheep. It is true. The black sheep gave up the white lambling into the care of a legitimate shepherd, who carried it off to a correct and appropriate fold. Then life was empty indeed, for, strange though it may seem, even black sheep have feelings—ridiculously out of place they are, too."

"Oh, don't speak so hardly!" said I tremulously, laying my hand for an instant upon his.

His face was turned towards me; his mien was severe, but serene; he spoke as of some far-past, distant dream.

"Then it was that in looking round my darkened horizon for Sigmund, I found that it was not empty. *You* rose trembling upon it like a star of light, and how beautiful a star! But there! do not turn away. I will not shock you by expatiating upon it. Enough that I found what I had more than once suspected—that I loved you. Once or twice I *nearly* made a fool of myself; that Carnival Monday—do you remember? Luckily Friedel and Karl came in, but in my saner moments I worshipped you as a noble, distant, good—part of the beautiful life which I had gambled with—and lost. Be easy! I never for one instant aspired to you—never thought of possessing you: I was not *quite* mad. I am only telling you this to explain, and——"

"And you renounced me?" said I in a low voice.

"I renounced you."

I removed my hand from my eyes, and looked at him. His eyes, dry and calm, rested upon my face. His countenance was pale; his mouth set with a grave, steady sweetness.

Light rushed in upon my mind in a radiant flood—light and knowledge. I knew what was right; an unerring finger pointed it to me. I looked deep, deep into his sad eyes, read his innermost soul, and found it pure.

"They say you have committed a crime," said I.

"And I have not denied, cannot deny it," he answered, as if waiting for something further.

"You need not," said I. "It is all one to me. I want to hear no more about that. I want to know if your heart is mine."

The wind wuthered wearily; the water rushed. Strange, inarticulate sounds of the night came fitfully across ear and sense, as he answered me:

"Yours and my honor's. What then?"

"This," I answered, stooping, sweeping the loose hair from that broad, sad forehead, and pressing my lips upon it. "This: accept the gift or reject it. As your heart is mine, so mine is yours—for ever and ever."

A momentary silence, as I raised myself trembling, and stood aside; and the water rushed, and the storm-birds on untiring wing beat the sky and croaked of the gale.

Then he drew me to him, folded me to his breast without speaking, and gave me a long, tender, yearning kiss, with unspeakable love, little passion in it, fit seal of a love that was deeper and sadder than it was triumphant.

"Let me have a few moments of this," said he, "just a few moments, May. Let me believe that I may hold you to your noble, pitying words. Then I shall be my own master again."

Ignoring this hint, I laid my hands upon his arm, and eying him steadily, went on:

"But understand, the man I love must not be my servant. If you want to keep me you must be the master; I brook no feeble curb; no weak hand can hold me. You must rule, or I shall rebel; you must show the way, for I

do not know it. I don't know whether you understand what you have undertaken."

"My dear, you are excited. Your generosity carries you away, and your divine, womanly pity and kindness. You speak without thinking. You will repent to-morrow."

"That is not kind nor worthy of you," said I. "I have thought about it for sixteen months, and the end of my thought has always been the same: I love Eugen Courvoisier, and if he had loved me I should have been a happy woman, and if—though I thought it too good to be true, you know—*if* he ever should tell me so, nothing in this world shall make me spoil our two lives by cowardice. I will hold to him against the whole world."

"It is impossible, May," he said quietly, after a pause. "I wish you had never seen me."

"It is only impossible if you make it so."

"My sin found me out even here, in this quiet place, where I knew no one. It will find me out again. You—if ever you were married to me—would be pointed out as the wife of a man who had disgraced his honor in the blackest, foulest way. I must and will live it out alone."

"You shall *not* live it out alone," I said.

The idea that I could stand by him—the fact that he was not prosperous, not stainless before the world—that mine would be no ordinary flourishing, meaningless marriage, in which "for better, for worse," signifies nothing but better, no worse—all this poured strength on strength into my heart, and seemed to warm it and do it good.

"I will tell you your duty," said he. "Your duty is to

go home and forget me. In due time some one else will find you the loveliest and dearest being in the world——"

"Eugen! Eugen!" I cried, stabbed to the quick. "How *can* you? You cannot love me, or you could not coldly turn me over to some other man, some abstraction——"

"Perhaps if he were *not* an abstraction, I might not be able to do it," he said, suddenly clasping me to him, with a jealous movement. "No; I am sure I should not be able to do it. Nevertheless, while he yet is an abstraction, and because of that, I say, leave me!"

"Eugen, I do not love lightly!" I began with forced calm. "I do not love twice. My love for you—is not a mere fancy—I fought against it with all my strength; it mastered me in spite of myself—now I cannot tear it away. If you send me away it will be barbarous; away to be alone, to England again, when I love you with my whole soul. No one but a man—no one but you could have said such a thing. If you do," I added, terror at the prospect overcoming me, "if you do I shall die—I shall *die*."

I could command myself no longer, but sobbed aloud.

"You will have to answer for it," I repeated; "but you will not send me away."

"What, in heaven's name, makes you love me so?" he asked, as if lost in wonder.

"I don't know. I cannot imagine," said I, with happy politeness. "It is no fault of mine." I took his hand in mine. "Eugen, look at me." His eyes met mine.

They brightened as he looked at me. "That crime of which you were accused—you did not do it."

Silence.

"Look at me and say that you did," I continued.

Silence still.

"Friedhelm Helfen always said you had not done it. He was more loyal than I," said I contritely; "but," I added jealously, "he did not love you better than I, for I loved you all the same even though I almost believed you had done it. Well, that is an easy secret to keep, because it is to your credit."

"That is just what makes it hard. If it were true, one would be anxious rather than not to conceal it; but as it is *not* true, don't you see? Whenever you see me suspected, it will be the impulse of your loyal, impetuous heart to silence the offender, and tell him he lies."

In my haste I had not seen this aspect of the question. It was quite a new idea to me. Yes, I began to see in truer proportions the kind of suffering he had suffered, the kind of trials he had gone through, and my breath failed at the idea. Yes, I saw what lay before me. When they pointed at him I must not say, "It is a lie; he is as honest as you." It was a solemn prospect. It overpowered me.

"You quail before that?" said he gently, after a pause.

"No; I realize it. I do not quail before it," said I firmly. "But," I added, looking at him with a new element in my glance—that of awe—"do you mean that for five years you have effaced yourself thus, knowing all the while that you were not guilty?"

"It was a matter of the clearest duty—and honor," he replied, flushing and looking somewhat embarrassed.

"Of *duty!*" I cried, strangely moved. "If you did not do it, who did? Why are you silent?"

Our eyes met. I shall never forget that glance. It had the concentrated patience, love and pride and loyalty, of all the years of suffering past and—to come.

"May, that is the test for you! That is what I shrink from exposing you to, what I know it is wrong to expose you to. I cannot tell you. No one knows but I, and I shall never tell any one, not even you, if you become my other self and soul and thought. Now you know all."

He was silent.

"So *that* is the truth?" said I. "Thank you for telling it to me. I always *thought* you were a hero; now I am sure of it. Oh, Eugen! how I *do* love you for this! And you need not be afraid. I have been learning to keep secrets lately. I shall help, not hinder you. Eugen, we will live it down together."

At last we understood each other. At last our hands clasped and our lips met upon the perfect union of feeling and purpose for all our future lives. All was clear between us, bright, calm; and *I*, at least, was supremely happy. How little my past looked now; how petty and insignificant all my former hopes and fears!

* * * * *

Dawn was breaking over the river. Wild and storm-beaten was the scene on which we looked. A huge waste of swollen waters around us, devastated villages, great

piles of wreck on all sides; a watery sun casting pallid beams upon the swollen river. We were sailing Hollandwards upon a fragment of the bridge, and in the distance were the spires and towers of a town gleaming in the sickly sun-rays. I stood up and gazed towards that town, and he stood by my side, his arm round my waist. My chief wish was that our sail could go on for ever.

"Do you know what is ringing in my ears, and will not leave my mind?" I asked.

"Indeed, no! You are a riddle and a mystery to me."

I hummed the splendid air from the Choral Symphony, the motif of the music to the choruses to "Joy" which follow.

"Ah!" said he, taking up its deep, solemn gladness, "you are right, May—quite right. There *is* a joy, if it be 'beyond the starry belt.'"

"I wonder what that town is?" I said after a pause.

"I am not sure, but I fancy it is Emmerich. I am sure I hope so."

Whatever the town, we were floating straight towards it. I suddenly thought of my dream long ago, and told it to him, adding:

"I think this must have been the floating wreck to which you and I seemed clinging; though I thought that all of the dream that was going to be fulfilled had already come to pass on that Carnival Monday afternoon."

The boat had got into one of the twisting currents, and was being propelled directly towards the town.

Eugen looked at me and laughed. I asked why.

"What for a lark! as they say in your country."

"You are quite mistaken. *I* never heard such an expression! But *what* is such a lark?"

"We have no hats: we want something to eat; we must have tickets to get back to Elberthal, and I have just two thaler in my pocket—oh! and a two-pfennig piece. I left my little all behind me."

"Hurrah! At last you will be *compelled* to take back that three thaler ten."

We both laughed at this *jeu d'esprit* as if it had been something exquisitely witty; and I forgot my dishevelled condition in watching the sun rise over the broad river, in feeling our noiseless progression over it, and, above all, in the divine sense of oneness and harmony with him at my side—a feeling which I can hardly describe, utterly without the passionate fitfulness of the orthodox lover's rapture, but as if for a long time I had been waiting for some quality to make me complete, and had quietly waked to find it there, and the world understandable—life's riddle read.

Eugen's caresses were few, his words of endearment quiet; but I knew what they stood for: a love rooted in feelings deeper than those of sense, holier than mere earthly love—feelings which had taken root in adversity, had grown in darkness and "made a sunshine in a shady place"—feelings which in him had their full and noble growth, and beauty of development, but which it seems to be the aim of the fashionable education of this period as

much as possible to do away with—the feelings of chivalry, delicacy, reticence, manliness, modesty.

As we drew nearer the town, he said to me:

"In a few hours we shall have to part, May, for a time. While we are here alone, and you are uninfluenced, let me ask you something. This love of yours for me—what will it carry you through?"

"Anything, now that I am sure of yours for me."

"In short, you are firmly decided to be my wife sometime?"

"When you tell me you are ready for me," said I, putting my hand in his.

"And if I find it best to leave my Fatherland, and begin life quite anew?"

"Thy God is my God, and thy people are my people, Eugen."

"One other thing. How do you know that you *can* marry? Your friends——"

"I am twenty years old. In a year I can do as I like," said I composedly. "Surely we can stand firm and faithful for a year?"

He smiled, and it was a new smile, sweet, hopeful, if not merry.

With this silent expression of determination and trust, we settled the matter.

CHAPTER II

" What's failure or success to me?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose."

EUGEN sent a telegram from Emmerich to Frau Mittendorf to reassure her as to my safety. At four in the afternoon we left that town, refreshed and rehatted, to reach Elberthal at six.

I told Eugen that we were going away the next day, to stay a short time at a place called Lahnburg.

He started, and looked at me.

" Lahnburg!—I—when you are there—*nein, das ist*—You are going to Lahnburg?"

" Yes. Why not?"

" You will know why I ask if you go to Schloss Rothenfels?"

" Why?"

" I say no more, dear May. I will leave you to form your own conclusions. I have seen that this fair head could think wisely and well under trying circumstances enough. I am rather glad that you *are* going to Lahnburg."

" The question is—will you still be at Elberthal when I return?"

" I cannot say. We had better exchange addresses. I am at Frau Schmidt's again—my old quarters. I do not know when or how we shall meet again. I must see Friedhelm, and you—when you tell your friends, you

will probably be separated at once and completely from me."

"Well, a year is not much out of our lives. How old are you, Eugen?"

"Thirty-two. And you?"

"Twenty and two months: then you are twelve years older than I. You were a schoolboy when I was born. What were you like?"

"A regular little brute, I should suppose, as they all are."

"When we are married," said I, "perhaps, I may go on with my singing, and earn some more money by it. My voice will be worth something to me then."

"I thought you had given up art."

"Perhaps I shall see Adelaide," I added, "or, rather, I *will* see her." I looked at him rather inquiringly. To my relief he said:

"Have you not seen her since her marriage?"

"No; have you?"

"She was my angel nurse when I was lying in hospital at ——. Did you not know that she has the Iron Cross? And no one ever won it more nobly."

"Adelaide—your nurse—the Iron Cross!" I ejaculated. "Then *you* have seen her?"

"Seen her shadow to bless it."

"Do you know where she is now?"

"With her husband at ——. *She* told me that you were in England, and she gave me this."

He handed me a yellow, much-worn folded paper, which,

on opening, I discovered to be my own letter to Adelaide, written during the war, and which had received so curt an answer.

"I begged very hard for it," said he, "and only got it with difficulty, but I represented that she might get more of them, whereas I——"

He stopped, for two reasons. I was weeping as I returned it to him, and the train rolled into the Elberthal station.

On my way to Dr. Mittendorf's I made up my mind what to do. I should not speak to Stella, nor to any one else of what had happened, but I should write very soon to my parents and tell them the truth. I hoped they would not refuse their consent, but I feared they would. I should certainly not attempt to disobey them while their authority legally bound me, but as soon as I was my own mistress, I should act upon my own judgment. I felt no fear of anything; the one fear of my life—the loss of Eugen—had been removed, and all others dwindled to nothing. My happiness, I am and was well aware, was quite set upon things below; if I lost Eugen I lost everything, for I, like him, and like all those who have been and are dearest to both of us, was a Child of the World.



CHAPTER III

" Oftmals hab' ich geirrt, und habe mich wiedergefunden,
Aber glücklicher nie."

IT was beginning to be dusk when we alighted next day at Lahnburg, a small wayside station, where the doctor's brand-new carriage met us, and after we had been bidden

welcome, whirled us off to the doctor's brand-new Schloss, full of brand-new furniture. I skip it all, the renewed greetings, the hospitality, the noise. They were very kind. It was all right to me, and I enjoyed it immensely. I was in a state of mind in which I verily believe I should have enjoyed eating a plate of porridge for supper, or a dish of *Sauerkraut* for dinner.

The subject for complacency and contemplation in Frau Mittendorf's life was her intimacy with the von Rothenfels family, whose great, dark old Schloss, or, rather, a portion of it, looking grimly over its woods, she pointed out to me from the windows of her salon. I looked somewhat curiously at it, chiefly because Eugen had mentioned it, and also because it was such a stern, imposing old pile. It was built of red stone, and stood upon red stone foundations. Red were the rocks of this country, and hence its name, *Rothenfels*, the red rocks. Woods, also dark, but now ablaze with the last fiery autumn tints, billowed beneath it; on the other side, said Frau Mittendorf, was a great plateau covered with large trees intersected by long, straight avenues. She would take us to look at it; the Gräfin von Rothenfels was a great friend of hers.

She was entertaining us with stories to prove the great regard and respect of the Countess for her (Frau Mittendorf) on the morning after our arrival, while I was longing to go out and stroll along some of those pleasant breezy upland roads, or explore the sleepy, quaint old town below.

Upon her narrative came an interruption. A servant threw open the door very wide, announcing the Gräfin von

Rothenfels. Frau Mittendorf rose in a tremulous flurry and flutter to greet her noble guest, and then introduced us to her.

A tall, melancholy, meagre-looking woman, far past youth—on the very confines of middle age; with iron-gray hair banded across a stern, much-lined brow. Colorless features of a strong, large, not unhandsome type, from which all liveliness and vivacity had long since fled. A stern mouth—steady, lustreless, severe eyes, a dignity—yes, even a majesty of mien which she did not attempt to soften into graciousness; black, trailing draperies; a haughty pride of movement.

Such was the first impression made upon me by Hildegarde, Countess of Rothenfels—a forbidding, if grand figure—aristocrat in every line; utterly alien and apart, I thought, from me, and every feeling of mine.

But on looking again the human element was found in the deeply-planted sadness which no reserve or pride could conceal. Sad the eyes, sad the mouth; she was all sad together—and not without reason, as I afterwards learnt.

She was a rigid Roman Catholic, and at sixteen had been married for *les convenances* to her cousin, Count Bruno von Rothenfels, a man a good deal older than herself, though not preposterously so, and whose ample possessions and old name gave social position of the highest kind. But he was a Protestant by education, a thinker by nature, a rationalist by conviction.

That was one bitter grief. Another was her childlessness. She had been married twenty-four years: no child

had sprung from the union. This was a continual grief which embittered her whole existence.

Since then I have seen a portrait of her at twenty—a splendid brunette, with high spirit and resolute will and noble beauty in every line. Ah me! What wretches we become! Sadness and bitterness, proud aloofness and a yearning wistfulness were subtly mingled in the demeanor of Gräfin von Rothenfels.

She bowed to us, as Frau Mittendorf introduced us. She did not bestow a second glance upon Stella; but bent a long look, a second, a third scrutinizing gaze upon me. I—I am not ashamed to own it—quivered somewhat under her searching glance. She impressed and fascinated me.

She seated herself, and slightly apologizing to us for intruding domestic affairs, began to speak with Frau Mittendorf of some case of village distress in which they were both interested. Then she turned again to us, speaking in excellent English, and asked us whether we were staying there, after which she invited us to dine at her house the following day, with Frau Mittendorf. After the invitation had been accepted with sufficient reverence by that lady, the Countess rose, as if to go, and turning again to me with still that pensive, half-wistful, half-mistrustful gaze, she said:

"I have my carriage here. Would you like to come with me to see our woods and house? They are sometimes interesting to strangers."

"Oh, very much!" I said eagerly.

"Then come," said she. "I will see that you are

escorted back when you are tired. It is arranged that you remain until you feel *gêné, nicht wahr?*"

"Oh, thank you!" said I again, hastening to make myself ready, and parenthetically hoping, as I ran upstairs, that Frau Mittendorf's eyes might not start *quite* out of her head with pride at the honor conferred upon her house and visitors.

Very soon I was seated beside the Gräfin in the dark-green clarence with the grand coachman, and the lady's own *Jäger* beside him, and we were driving along a white road with a wild kind of country spreading round—moorland stretches, and rich deep woods. Up and down, for the way was uneven, till we entered a kind of park, and to the right, high above, I saw the great red pile with its little pointed towers crowned with things like extinguishers ending in a lightning-rod, and which seemed to spring from all parts of the heavy mass of the main building.

That, then, was Schloss Rothenfels. It looked the very image of an aristocratic, ancient *feste Burg*, grim and grand; it brooded over us like a frown, and dominated the landscape for miles around. I was deeply impressed; such a place had always been like a dream to me.

There was something so imposingly conservative about it; it looked as if it had weathered so many storms; defying such paltry forces as wind and weather, and would abide through so many more, quite untouched by the roar of life and progress outside—a fit and firm keeping-place for old shields, for weapons honorably hacked and dinted, for tattered loyal flags—for art treasures and for proud beauties.

As we gained the height, I perceived the huge scale on which the Schloss was constructed. It was a little town in itself. I saw, too, that plateau on the other side, of which I had heard; later I explored it. It was a natural plain—a kind of table-land, and was laid out in what have always, since I was a child, impressed me more than any other kind of surroundings to a house—mile-long avenues of great trees, stretching perfectly straight, like lines of marching troops in every direction.

Long, melancholy alleys and avenues, with huge, moss-grown stone figures and groups guarding the terraces or keeping fantastic watch over the stone tanks on whose surfaces floated the lazy water-lilies. Great moss-grown gods and goddesses, and strange hybrid beasts, and fauns and satyrs, and all so silent and forlorn, with the lush grass and heavy fern growing rank and thick under the stately trees. To right they stretched and to left; and straight away westward was one long, wide, vast, deserted avenue, at the end of which was an opening, and in the opening a huge stone myth or figure of a runner, who in the act of racing receives an arrow in his heart, and with arms madly tossed in the air, staggers back.

Behind this terrible figure the sun used to set, flaming, or mild, or sullen, and the vast arms of it were outlined against the gorgeous sky, or in the half-dark it glimmered like a ghost and seemed to move. It had been there so long that none could remember the legend of it. It was a grim shape.

Scattered here and there were quaint wildernesses and

pleasaunces—clipped yews and oddly-trained shrubs and flowers trying to make a diversion, but ever dominated by the huge woods, the straight avenues; the mathematical melancholy on an immense scale.

The Frau Gräfin glanced at me once or twice as my head turned eagerly this way and that, and my eyes could not take in the strange scene quickly enough; but she said nothing, nor did her severe face relax into any smile.

We stopped under a huge *porte-cochère* in which more servants were standing about.

"Come with me," said the lady to me. "First I will take you to my rooms, and then when you have rested a little you can do what you like."

Pleased at the prospect, I followed her; through a hall which without any joking was baronial; through a corridor into a room, through which she passed, observing to me:

"This is the Rittersaal, one of the oldest rooms in the house."

The Rittersaal—a real, hereditary Hall of Knights where a *Sängerkrieg* might have taken place—where Tannhäuser and the others might have contended before Elizabeth. A polished parquet—a huge hearth on which burnt a large bright wood fire whose flames sparkled upon suits of mail in dozens—crossed swords and lances, over which hung tattered banners and bannerets. Shields and lances, portraits with each a pair of spurs beneath it—the men were all knights, of that line! dark and grave chiefly were these lords of the line of Sturm. In the centre of the hall a great trophy of arms and armor, all of which had

been used, and used to purpose; the only drapery the banners over these lances and portraits. The room delighted me while it made me feel small—very small. The Countess turned at a door at the other end and looked back upon me where I stood gasping in the doorway by which we had entered. *She* was one of the house; this had nothing overpowering for her, if it did give some of the pride to her mien.

I hurried after her, apologizing for my tardiness; she waved the words back, and led me on to a smaller room, which appeared to be her own private sitting-room. Here she asked me to lay aside my things, adding that she hoped I should spend the day at the Schloss.

"If you find it not too intolerably stupid," she added. "It is a dull place."

I said that it seemed to me like something out of a fairy tale, and that I longed to see more of it if I might.

"Assuredly you shall. There may be some few things which you may like to see. I forget that every one is not like myself—tired. Are you musical?"

"*Very!*" said I emphatically.

"Then you will be interested in the music-rooms here. How old are you?"

I told her. She bowed gravely. "You are young, and, I suppose, happy?" she remarked.

"Yes, I am—very happy—perfectly happy," said I, smiling, because I could not help it.

"When I saw you I was so struck with that look," said she. "I thought I had never seen any one look so radi-

antly, transcendently happy. I so seldom see it—and never feel it, and I wished to see more of you. I am very glad you *are* so happy—very glad. Now I will not keep you talking to me. I will send for Herr Nahrath, who shall be your guide."

She rang the bell. I was silent, although I longed to say that I could talk to her for a day without thinking of weariness, which indeed was true. She impressed and fascinated me.

"Send Herr Nahrath here," she said, and presently there came into the room a young man in the garb of what is called in Germany a *Candidat*—that is to say, an embryo *Pastor*, or Parish Priest. He bowed very deeply to the Countess and did not speak or advance much beyond the door.

Having introduced us, she desired him to act as cicerone to me until I was tired. He bowed, and I did not dispute the mandate, although I would rather have remained with her, and got to know something of the nature that lay behind those gray passionless features, than turn to the society of that smug-looking young gentleman who waited so respectfully, like a machine whose mainspring was awe.

I accompanied him nevertheless, and he showed me part of the Schloss, and endeavored in the intervals of his tolerably arduous task of cicerone to make himself agreeable to me. It was a wonderful place indeed—this Schloss. The deeper we penetrated into it, the more absorbed and interested did I become. Such piled-up, profusely-scattered treasures of art it had never before

fallen to my lot to behold. The abundance was prodigal; the judgment, cultivation, high perception of truth, rarity and beauty, seemed almost faultless. Gems of pictures—treasures of sculpture, bronze, china, carvings, glass, coins, curiosities, which it would have taken a lifetime properly to learn. Here I saw for the first time a private library on a large scale, collected by generation after generation of highly-cultured men and women—a perfect thing of its kind, and one which impressed me mightily; but it was not there that I was destined to find the treasure which lay hidden for me in this enchanted palace. We strayed over an acre or so of passage and corridor till he paused before an arched door across which hung a curtain, and over which was inscribed *Musikkammern* (The Music Rooms).

"If you wish to see the music, *mein Fräulein*, I must leave you in the hands of Herr Brunken, who will tolerate no cicerone but himself."

"Oh, I wish to see it, certainly," said I, on fire with curiosity.

He knocked, and was bidden *Herein!* but not going in, told some one inside that he recommended to his charge a young lady staying with the Countess, and who was desirous of seeing the collection.

"Pray, *mein Fräulein*, come in!" said a voice.

Herr Nahrath left me, and I, lifting the curtain and pushing open the half-closed door, found myself in an octagonal room, confronted by the quaintest figure I had ever seen. An old man whose long gray hair, long white

beard, and long black robe made him look like a wizard or astrologer of some mediæval romance, was smiling at me and bidding me welcome to his domain. He was the librarian and general custodian of the musical treasures of Schloss Rothenfels, and his name was Brunken. He loved his place and his treasures with a jealous love, and would talk of favorite instruments as if they had been dear children, and of great composers as if they were gods.

All around the room were large shelves filled with music —and over each division stood a name—such mighty names as Scarlatti, Bach, Händel, Beethoven, Schumann, Mozart, Haydn—all the giants, and apparently all the pigmies too, were there. It was a complete library of music, and though I have seen many since, I have never beheld any which in the least approached this in richness and completeness. Rare old manuscript scores; priceless editions of half-forgotten music; the literature of the productions of half-forgotten composers; Eastern music, Western music; and music of all ages; it was an idealized collection—a musician's paradise, only less so than that to which he now led me, from amidst the piled-up scores and the gleaming busts of those mighty men, who here at least were honored with never-failing reverence.

He took me into a second room, or rather hall, of great size, height, and dimensions, a museum of musical instruments. It would take far too long to do it justice in description; indeed, on that first brief investigation I could only form a dim, general idea of the richness of its treasures. What histories—what centuries of story were

there piled up! Musical instruments of every imaginable form and shape, and in every stage of development. Odd-looking, pre-historic bone embryo instruments from different parts of France. Strange old things from Nineveh, and India, and Peru; instruments from tombs and pyramids, and ancient ruined temples in tropic groves—things whose very nature and handling is a mystery and a dispute —tuned to strange scales which produce strange melodies, and carry us back into other worlds. On them, perhaps, has the swarthy Ninevan, or slight Hindoo, or some

"Dusky youth with painted plumage gay,"

performed as he apostrophized his mistress's eyebrow. On that queer-looking thing which may be a fiddle or not—which may have had a bow or not—a slightly-clad slave made music while his master the Rayah played chess with his favorite wife. They are all dead and gone now, and their jewels are worn by others, and the memory of them has vanished from off the earth; and these, their musical instruments, repose in a quiet corner amid the rough hills and oak-woods and under the cloudy skies of the land of music—*Deutschland.*

Down through the changing scale, through the whole range of cymbal and spinet, "flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and *all* kinds of music" stand literally before me, and a strange revelation it is. Is it the same faculty which produces that grand piano of Bechstein's, and that clarion organ of Silbermann's, and that African drum dressed out with human skulls, that war-trumpet

hung with tiger's teeth ? After this nothing is wonderful ! Strange, unearthly-looking Chinese frames of sonorous stones or modulated bells; huge drums, painted and carved, and set up on stands six feet from the ground; quaint instruments from the palaces of Aztec Incas, down to pianos by Broadwood, Collard and Collard, and Bechstein.

There were trophies of *Streichinstrumente* and *Blasinstrumente*. I was allowed to gaze upon two real Stradivarius fiddles. I might see the development by evolution, and the survival of the fittest in violin, *cello*, contrabass, alto, beside countless others whose very names have perished with the time that produced them, and the fingers which played them—ingenious guesses, clever misses—the tragedy of harmony as well as its *Io Pæan !*

There were wind instruments, quaint old double flutes from Italy; pipes, single, double, treble, from ages much farther back; harps—Assyrian, Greek, and Roman; instruments of percussion, guitars, and cithers in every form and kind; a dulcimer—I took it up and thought of Coleridge's "damsel with a dulcimer"; and a grand organ, as well as many incipient organs, and the quaint little things of that nature from China, Japan, and Siam.

I stood and gazed in wonder and amazement.

"Surely the present Graf has not collected all these instruments !" said I.

"Oh no, *mein Fräulein;* they have been accumulating for centuries. They tell strange tales of what the Sturms will do for music."

With which he proceeded to tell me certain narratives of certain instruments in the collection, in which he evidently firmly believed, including one relating to a quaint old violin for which he said a certain Graf von Rothenfels called *Max der Tolle*, or the mad Count Max, had sold his soul.

As he finished this last he was called away, and excusing himself, left me. I was alone in this voiceless temple of so many wonderful sounds. I looked round, and a feeling of awe and weirdness crept over me. My eyes would not leave that shabby old fiddle, concerning whose demoniac origin I had just heard such a cheerful little anecdote. Every one of those countless instruments was capable of harmony and discord—had sometime been used; pressed, touched, scraped, beaten or blown into by hands or mouths long since crumbled to dust. What tales had been told! what songs sung, and in what languages; what laughs laughed, tears shed, vows spoken, kisses exchanged, over some of those silent pieces of wood, brass, ivory, and catgut! The feelings of all the histories that surrounded me had something eerie in it.

I stayed until I began to feel nervous, and was thinking of going away when sounds from a third room drew my attention. Some one in there began to play the violin, and to play it with no ordinary delicacy of manipulation. There was something exquisitely finished, refined, and delicate about the performance; it lacked the bold splendor and originality of Eugen's playing, but it was so lovely as to bring tears to my eyes, and, moreover, the air was my favorite *Träumerei*. Something in those sounds, too, was

familiar to me. With a sudden beating of the heart, a sudden eagerness, I stepped hastily forward, pushed back the dividing curtain, and entered the room whence proceeded those sounds.

In the middle of the room, which was bare and empty, but which had large windows looking across the melancholy plateau, and to the terrible figure of the runner at the end of the avenue—stood a boy—a child with a violin. He was dressed richly, in velvet and silk; he was grown—the slender delicacy of his form was set off by the fine clothing that rich men's children wear; his beautiful waving black hair was somewhat more closely cut, but the melancholy yet richly-colored young face that turned towards me—the deep and yearning eyes, the large, solemn gaze, the premature gravity, were all his—it was Sigmund, Courvoisier's boy.

For a moment we both stood motionless—hardly breathing; then he flung his violin down, sprang forward with a low sound of intense joy, exclaiming:

"*Das Fräulein, das Fräulein*, from home!" and stood before me trembling from head to foot.

I snatched the child to my heart (he looked so much older and sadder), and covered him with kisses.

He submitted—nay, more, he put his arms about my neck and laid his face upon my shoulder, and presently, as if he had choked down some silent emotion, looked up at me with large, imploring, sad eyes, and asked:

"Have you seen my father?"

"Sigmund, I saw him the day before yesterday."



"You saw him—you spoke to him, perhaps?"

"Yes. I spoke long with him."

"What did he look like?"

"As he always does—brave and true and noble."

"*Nicht wahr?*" said the boy, with flashing eyes. "I know how he looks, just. I am waiting till I am grown up, that I may go to him again."

"Do you like me, Sigmund?"

"Yes; very much."

"Do you think you could love me? Would you trust me to love those you love?"

"Do you mean *him?*" he asked point-blank, and looked at me, somewhat startled.

"Yes."

"I—don't know."

"I mean, to take care of him, and try to make him happy till you come to him again, and then we will all be together."

He looked doubtful still.

"What I mean, Sigmund, is that your father and I are going to be married; but we shall never be quite happy until you are with us."

He stood still, taking it in, and I waited in much anxiety. I was certain that if I had time and opportunity I could win him; but I feared the result of this sudden announcement, and then separation. He might only see that his father—his supreme idol—could turn for comfort to another, while he would not know how I loved him and longed to make his grave young life happy for him. I put

my arm round his shoulder, and kneeling down beside him, said:

"You must say you are glad, Sigmund, or you will make me very unhappy. I want you to love me as well as him. Look at me and tell me you will trust me till we are all together, for I am sure we shall be together some day."

He still hesitated some little time, but at last said, with the sedateness peculiar to him, as of one who overcame a struggle and made a sacrifice:

"If he has decided it so it must be right, you know, but —but—you won't let him forget me, will you?"

The child's nature overcame that which had been as it were supplanted and grafted upon it. The lip quivered, the dark eyes filled with tears. Poor little lonely child! desolate and sad in the midst of all the grandeur! My heart yearned to him.

"Forget you, Sigmund? Your father never forgets; he *cannot.*"

"I wish I was grown up," was all he said.

Then it occurred to me to wonder how he got there, and in what relation he stood to these people.

"Do you live here, Sigmund?"

"Yes."

"What relation are you to the Herrn Grafen?"

"Graf von Rothenfels is my uncle."

"And are they kind to you?" I asked in a hasty whisper, for his intense gravity and sadness oppressed me. I trembled to think of having to tell his father in what state I had found him.

"Oh yes!" said he. "Yes, very."

"What do you do all day?"

"I learn lessons from Herr Nahrath, and I ride with Uncle Bruno, and—and—oh! I do whatever I like. Uncle Bruno says that some time I shall go to Bonn, or Heidelberg, or Jena, or England, whichever I like."

"And have you no friends?"

"I like being with Brunken the best. He talks to me about my father sometimes. He knew him when he was only as old as I am."

"Did he? Oh, I did not know that."

"But they won't tell me why my father never comes here, and why they never speak of him," he added wearily, looking with melancholy eyes across the lines of wood, through the wide window.

"Be sure it is for nothing wrong. He does nothing but what is good and right," said I.

"Oh, of course! But I can't tell the reason. I think and think about it." He put his hand wearily to his head. "They never speak of him. Once I said something about him. It was at a great dinner they had. Aunt Hildegarde turned quite pale, and Uncle Bruno called me to him and said—no one heard it but me, you know—'Never let me hear that name again!' and his eyes looked so fierce. I'm tired of this place," he added mournfully. "I want to be at Elberthal again—at the Wehrhahn, with my father and Friedhelm and Karl Linders. I think of them every hour. I liked Karl and Friedhelm, and Gretchen, and Frau Schmidt."

"They do not live there now, dear, Friedhelm and your father," said I gently.

"Not? Then where are they?"

"I do not know," I was forced to say. "They were fighting in the war. I think they live at Berlin now, but I am not at all sure."

This uncertainty seemed to cause him much distress, and he would have added more, but our conversation was brought to an end by the entrance of Brunken, who looked rather surprised to see us in such close and earnest consultation.

"Will you show me the way back to the Countess's room?" said I to Sigmund.

He put his hand in mine, and led me through many of those interminable halls and passages until we came to the Rittersaal again.

"Sigmund," said I, "are you not proud to belong to these?" and I pointed to the dim portraits hanging around.

"Yes," said he doubtfully. "Uncle Bruno is always telling me that I must do nothing to disgrace their name, because I shall one day rule their lands; but," he added, with more animation, "do you not see all these likenesses? These are all counts of Rothenfels, who have been heads of the family. You see the last one is here—Graf Bruno—my uncle. But in another room there are a great many more portraits, ladies and children and young men, and a man is painting a likeness of me, which is going to be hung up there: but *my father is not there.* What does it mean?"

I was silent. I knew his portrait must have been removed because he was considered to be living in dishonor—a stain to the house, who was perhaps the most chivalrous of the whole race; but this I could not tell Sigmund. It was beginning already, the trial, the "test" of which he had spoken to me, and it was harder in reality than in anticipation.

"I don't want to be stuck up there where he has no place," Sigmund went on sullenly. "And I should like to cut the hateful picture to pieces when it comes."

With this he ushered me into Gräfin Hildegarde's boudoir again. She was still there, and a tall, stately, stern-looking man of some fifty years was with her.

His appearance gave me a strange shock. He was Eugen, older and without any of his artist brightness; Eugen's grace turned into pride and stony hauteur. He looked as if he could be savage upon occasion; a nature born to power and nurtured in it. Ruggedly upright, but narrow. I learnt him by heart afterwards, and found that every act of his was the direct, unsoftened outcome of his nature.

This was Graf Bruno; this was the proud, intensely feeling man who had never forgiven the stain which he supposed his brother had brought upon their house; this was he who had proposed such hard, bald, pitiless terms concerning the parting of father and son—who forbade the child to speak of the loved one.

"Ha!" said he, "you have found Sigmund, *mein Fräulein?* Where did you meet, then?"

His keen eyes swept me from head to foot. In that, at least, Eugen resembled him; my lover's glance was as hawk-like as this, and as impenetrable.

"In the music-room," said Sigmund: and the uncle's glance left me and fell upon the boy.

I soon read *that* story. The child was at once the light of his eyes and the bitterness of his life. As for Countess Hildegarde, she gazed at her nephew with all a mother's soul in her pathetic eyes, and was silent.

"Come here," said the Graf, seating himself, and drawing the boy to him. "What hast thou been doing?"

There was no fear in the child's demeanor—he was too thoroughly a child of their own race to know fear—but there was no love, no lighting up of the features, no glad meeting of the eyes.

"I was with Nahrath till Aunt Hildegarde sent for him, and then I went to practise."

"Practise what? Thy riding or fencing?"

"No; my violin."

"Bah! What an extraordinary thing it is that this lad has no taste for anything but fiddling," observed the uncle, half aside.

Gräfin Hildegarde looked sharply and apprehensively up.

Sigmund shrank a little away from his uncle, not timidly, but with some distaste. Words were upon his lips; his eyes flashed, his lips parted; then he checked himself, and was silent.

"*Nun denn!*" said the Count. "What hast thou? Out with it!"

"Nothing that it would please thee to hear, uncle; therefore I will not say it," was the composed retort.

The grim-looking man laughed a grim little laugh, as if satisfied with the audacity of the boy, and his grizzled moustache swept the soft cheek.

"I ride no further this morning; but this afternoon I shall go to Mulhausen. Wilt thou come with me?"

"Yes, uncle."

Neither willing nor unwilling was the tone, and the answer appeared to dissatisfy the other, who said:

"'Yes, uncle'—what does that mean? Dost thou not wish to go?"

"Oh yes! I would as soon go as stay at home."

"But the distance, Bruno," here interposed the Countess in a low tone. "I am sure it is too far. He is not strong."

"Distance? Pooh! Hildegarde, I wonder at you; considering what stock you come of, you should be superior to such nonsense! Wert thou thinking of the distance, Sigmund?"

"Distance—no," said he indifferently.

"Come with me," said the elder. "I want to show thee something."

They went out of the room together. Yes, it was self-evident; the man idolized the child. Strange mixture of sternness and softness! The supposed sin of the father was never to be pardoned; but natural affection was to have its way, and be lavished upon the son; and the son could not return it, because the influence of the banished

scapegrace was too strong—he had won it all for himself, as scapegraces have the habit of doing.

Again I was left alone with the Countess, sitting upright over her embroidery. A dull life this great lady led. She cared nothing for the world's gaieties, and she had neither chick nor child to be ambitious for. Her husband was polite enough to her; but she knew perfectly well, and accepted it as a matter of course, that the death of her who had lived with him and been his companion for twenty-five years, would have weighed less by half with him than any catastrophe to that mournful, unenthusiastic child, who had not been two years under their roof, and who displayed no delight in the wealth of love lavished upon him.

She knew that *she* also adored the child, but that his affection was hard to get. She dared not show her love openly, or in the presence of her husband, who seemed to look upon the boy as his exclusive property, and was as jealous as a tiger of the few and faint testimonies of affection manifested by his darling. A dull journey to Berlin once a year, an occasional visitor, the society of her director and that of her husband—who showed how much at home with her he felt by going to sleep whenever he was more than quarter of an hour in her presence—a little interest of a lofty, distant kind in her townspeople of the poorer sort, an occasional call upon or from some distant neighbor of a rank approaching her own; for the rest, embroidery in the newest patterns and most elegant style; some few books, chiefly religious and polemical works—and what can be drearier than Roman Catholic

polemics, unless, indeed, Protestant ones eclipse them ?—a large house, vast estates, servants who never raised their voices beyond a certain tone; the envy of all the middle-class women, the fear and reverential curtseys of the poorer ones—a cheerful existence, and one which accounted for some of the wrinkles which so plentifully decked her brow.

"That is our nephew," said she; "my husband's heir."

"I have often seen him before," said I; "but I should have thought that his father would be your husband's next heir."

Never shall I forget the look she darted upon me—the awful glance which swept over me scathingly, ere she said, in icy tones:

"What do you mean ? Have you seen—or do you know —Graf Eugen ?"

There was a pause, as if the name had not passed her lips for so long that now she had difficulty in uttering it.

"I knew him as Eugen Courvoisier," said I; but the other name was a revelation to me, and told me that he was also 'to the manner born.' "I saw him two days ago, and I conversed with him," I added.

She was silent for a moment, and surveyed me with a haggard look. I met her glance fully, openly.

"Do you wish to know anything about him ?" I asked.

"Certainly not," said she, striving to speak frigidly; but there was a piteous tremble in her low tones. "The man has dis—— What am I saying ? It is sufficient to say that he is not on terms with his family."

"So he told me," said I, struggling on my own part to keep back the burning words that rose within me.

The Countess looked at me—looked again. I saw now that this was one of the great sorrows of her sorrowful life. She felt that to be consistent she *ought* to wave aside the subject with calm contempt; but it made her heart bleed. I pitied her; I felt an odd kind of affection for her already. The promise I had given to Eugen lay hard and heavy upon me.

"What did he tell you?" she asked at last; and I paused ere I answered, trying to think what I could make of this opportunity. "Do you know the facts of the case?" she added.

"No; he said he would write."

"Would *write!*" she echoed, suspending her work, and fixing me with her eyes. "Would write—to whom?"

"To me."

"You correspond with him?" There was a tremulous eagerness in her manner.

"I have never corresponded with him yet," said I, "but I have known him long, and loved him almost from the first. The other day I promised—to—marry him."

"You?" said she; "you are going to marry Eugen! Are you—" Her eyes said, "Are you good enough for him?" but she came to an abrupt conclusion. "Tell me," said she, "where did you meet him, and how?"

I told her in what capacity I had become acquainted with him, and she listened breathlessly. Every moment I felt the prohibition to speak heavier, for I saw that the

Countess of Rothenfels would have been only too delighted to hail any idea, any suggestion, which would allow her to indulge the love that, though so strong, she rigidly repressed. I dare say I told my story in a halting kind of way; it was difficult for me on the spur of the moment to know clearly what to say and what to leave unsaid. As I told the Countess about Eugen's and my voyage down the river, a sort of smile tried to struggle out upon her lips; it was evidently as good as a romance to her. I finished, saying:

"That is the truth, *gnädige Frau*. All I fear is that I am not good enough for him—shall not satisfy him."

"My child!" said she, and paused. "My dear child," she took both my hands, and her lips quivered, "you do not know how I feel for you. I can feel for you because I fear that with you it will be as it was with me. Do you know any of the *circumstances* under which Eugen von Rothenfels left his friends?"

"I do not know them circumstantially. I know he was accused of something, and—and—did not—I mean——"

"*Could* not deny it," she said. "I dare not take the responsibility of leaving you in ignorance. I must tell you all, and may Our Lady give me eloquence!"

"I should like to hear the story, madame, but I do not think any eloquence will change my mind."

"He always had a manner calculated to deceive and charm," said she; "always. Well, my husband is his half-brother. I was their cousin. They are the sons of different mothers, and my husband is many years older

than Eugen—eighteen years older. He, my husband, was thirty years old when he succeeded to the name and estates of his father—Eugen, you see, was just twelve years old, a schoolboy. We were just married. It is a very long time ago—*ach, ja!* a very long time ago! We played the part of parents to that boy. We were childless, and, as time went on, we lavished upon him all the love which we should have bestowed upon our own children had we been happy enough to have any. I do not think any one was better loved than he. It so happened that his own inheritance was not a large one; that made no difference. My husband, with my fullest consent and approbation, had every intention of providing for him; we had enough and to spare: money and land and house-room for half-a-dozen families, and our two selves alone to enjoy it all. He always *seemed* fond of us. I suppose it was his facile manner, which could take the appearance of an interest and affection which he did not feel——"

"No, Frau Gräfin! no, indeed!"

"Wait till you have heard all, my poor child. Every one loved him. How proud I was of him! Sometimes I think it is a chastisement, but had you been in my place you would have been proud too; so gallant, so handsome, such grace, and such a charm. He was the joy of my life," she said in a passionate undertone. "He went by the name of a worthy descendant of his ancestors in all essential things: honor and loyalty and bravery, and so on. They used to call him *Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter*, after the old song. He was wild and impatient of con-

trol, but who is not? I hate your young men whose veins run milk, not blood. He was one of a fiery, passionate line. At the universities he was extravagant; we heard of all sorts of follies."

"Did you ever hear of anything base—anything underhand or dishonorable?"

"Never—oh, never. High play. He was very intimate with a set of young Englishmen, and the play was dreadful, it is true; he betted too. That is a curse. Play and horses, and general recklessness and extravagance, but no wine and no women. I never heard that he had the least affinity for either of these dissipations. There were debts—I suppose all young men in his position make debts," said the Countess placidly. "My husband made debts at college, and I am sure my brothers did. Then he left college and lived at home awhile, and that was the happiest time of my life. But it is over.

"Then he entered the army—of course. His family interest procured him promotion. He was captain in a fine Uhlan regiment. He was with his regiment at Berlin and Munich, and—— And always we heard the same tales —play and wild, fast living. Music always had a hold upon him.

"In the midst of his extravagance he was sometimes so simple. I remember we were dreadfully frightened at a rumor that he had got entangled with Fräulein ——, a singer of great beauty at the *Hofoper* at ——. I got my husband to let me write about it. I soon had an answer from Eugen. How he laughed at me! He had paid a lot of debts for the

girl, which had been pressing heavily upon her since her career began; now he said he trusted she would get along swimmingly; he was going to her benefit that night.

"But when he was at ——, and when he was about six and twenty, he really did get engaged to be married. He wrote and told us about it. That was the first bitter blow: she was an Italian girl of respectable but by no means noble family—he was always a dreadful radical in such matters. She was governess in the house of one of his friends in ——.

"We did everything we could think of to divert him from it. It was useless. He married her, but he did not become less extravagant. She did not help him to become steady, I must say. She liked gaiety and admiration, and he liked her to be worshipped. He indulged her frightfully. He played—he would play so dreadfully.

"We had his wife over to see us, and he came with her. We were agreeably surprised. She quite won our hearts. She was very beautiful and very charming—had rather a pretty voice, though nothing much. We forgave all his misconduct, and my husband talked to him and implored him to amend. He said he would. Mere promises! It was so easy to him to make promises.

"That poor young wife! Instead of pitying him for having made a mésalliance, we know now that it was she who was to be pitied for having fallen into the hands of such a black-hearted, false man——"

The lady paused. The recital evidently cost her some pain and some emotion.

She went on:

"She was expecting her confinement. They returned to ——, where we also had a house, and we went with them. Vittoria shortly afterwards gave birth to a son. That was in our house. My husband would have it so. That son was to reconcile all and make everything straight. At that time Eugen must have been in some anxiety: he had been betting heavily on the English Derby. We did not know that, nor why he had gone to England. At last it came out that he was simply ruined. My husband was dreadfully cut up. I was very unhappy—so unhappy that I was ill and confined to my room.

"My husband left town for a few days to come over to Rothenfels on business. Eugen was scarcely ever in the house. I thought it was our reproachful faces that he did not wish to see. Then my husband came back. He was more cheerful. He had been thinking things over, he said. He kissed me, and told me to cheer up: he had a plan for Eugen, which, he believed, would set all right again.

"In that very moment some one asked to see him. It was a clerk from the bank with a check which they had cashed the day before. Had my husband signed it? I saw him look at it for a moment. Then he sent the man away, saying that he was then busy and would communicate with him. Then he showed me the check. It was payable to the bearer, and across the back was written 'Vittoria von Rothenfels.'

"You must bear in mind that Eugen was living in his

own house, in another quarter of the town. My husband sent the check to him with a brief inquiry as to whether he knew anything about it. Then he went out: he had an appointment, and when he returned he found a letter from Eugen. It was not long: it was burnt into my heart, and I have never forgotten a syllable of it. It was:

"'I return the check. I am guilty. I relieve you of all further responsibility about me. It is evident that I am not fit for my position. I leave this place for ever, taking the boy with me. Vittoria does not seem to care about having him. Will you look after her? Do not let her starve in punishment for my sin. For me—I leave you forever.

"'EUGEN.'

"That was the letter. *Mein Gott—mein Gott!* Oh, it is hideous, child, to find that those in whom you *believed* so intensely are bad—rotten to the core. I had loved Eugen: he had made a sunshine in my not very cheerful life. His coming was a joy to me, his going away a sorrow. It made everything so much blacker when the truth came out. Of course the matter was hushed up.

"My husband took immediate steps about it. Soon afterwards we came here; Vittoria with us. Poor girl! Poor girl! She did nothing but weep and wring her hands, moan and lament and wonder why she had ever been born, and at last she died of decline—that is to say, they called it decline, but it was really a broken heart. That is the story—a black chronicle, is it not? You know about Sigmund's coming here. My husband remembered

that he was heir to our name, and we were in a measure responsible for him. Eugen had taken the name of a distant family connection on his mother's side—she had French blood in her veins—Courvoisier. Now you know all, my child—he is *not* good. Do not trust him."

I was silent. My heart burned; my tongue longed to utter ardent words, but I remembered his sad smile as he said, "You shrink from that," and I braced myself to silence. The thing seemed to me altogether so pitiable—and yet—and yet, I had sworn. But how had *he* lived out these five terrible years?

By-and-by the luncheon-bell rang. We all met once more. I felt every hour more like one in a dream or in some impossible old romance. That piece of outward death-like reserve, the Countess, with the fire within which she was forever spending her energy in attempts to quench; that conglomeration of ice, pride, roughness and chivalry, the Herr Graf himself; the thin, wooden-looking priest, the director of the *Gräfin;* that lovely picture of grace and bloom, with the dash of melancholy, Sigmund; certainly it was the strangest company in which I had ever been present.

The Countess sent me home in the afternoon, reminding me that I was engaged to dine there with the others to-morrow. I managed to get a word aside with Sigmund—to kiss him and tell him I should come to see him again. Then I left them; interested, enthralled, fascinated with them and their life, and—more in love with Eugen than ever.



CHAPTER IV

"Where is my Father?"

We had been bidden to dine at the Schloss—Frau Mittendorf, Stella, and I. In due time the Doctor's new carriage was called out, and seated in it we were driven to the great castle. With a renewed joy and awe, I looked at it by twilight, with the dusk of sunset veiling its woods and turning the whole mass to the color of a deep earth-stain. Eugen's home: there he had been born; as the child of such a race, and in its traditions he had been nurtured by that sad lady whom we were going to see. I at least knew that he had acted, was now acting, up to the very standard of his high calling. The place had lost much of its awfulness for me; it had become even friendly and lovely.

The dinner was necessarily a solemn one. I was looking out for Sigmund, who, however, did not put in any appearance.

After dinner, when we were all assembled in a vast salon

which the numberless wax-lights did but partially and in the centre illuminate, I determined to make an effort at release from this seclusion, and asked the Countess (who had motioned me to a seat beside her) where Sigmund was.

"He seemed a little languid and not inclined to come downstairs," said she. "I expect he is in the music-room —he generally finds his way there."

"Oh, I wish you would allow me to go and see him."

"Certainly, my child," said she, ringing; and presently a servant guided me to the door of the music-room, and in answer to my knock I was bidden *Herein!*

I entered. The room was in shadow; but a deep, glowing fire burnt in a great cavernous, stone fire-place, and shone upon huge brass andirons on either side the hearth. In an easy-chair sat Brunken, the old librarian, and his white hair and beard were also warmed into rosiness by the fire-glow. At his feet lay Sigmund, who had apparently been listening to some story of his old friend. His hands were clasped about the old man's knee, his face upturned, his hair pushed back.

Both turned as I came in; and Sigmund sprang up, but ere he had advanced two paces, paused and stood still, as if overcome with languor or weariness.

"Sigmund, I have come to see you," said I, coming to the fire and greeting the old man, who welcomed me hospitably.

I took Sigmund's hand: it was hot and dry. I kissed him: lips and cheeks were burning and glowing crimson. I swept the hair from his brow: that too was burning, and



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his temples throbbed. His eyes met mine with a strange, misty look. Saying nothing, I seated myself in a low chair near the fire, and drew him to me. He nestled up to me, and I felt that if Eugen could see us he would be almost satisfied. Sigmund did not *say* anything. He merely settled his head upon my breast, gave a deep sigh as if of relief, and closing his eyes, said:

"Now, Brunken, go on!"

"As I was saying, *mein Liebling*, I hope to prove all former theorists and writers upon the subject to have been wrong——"

"He's talking about a *Magrepha*," said Sigmund, still not opening his eyes.

"A *Magrepha*—what may that be?" I inquired.

"Yes. Some people say it was a real full-blown organ," explained Sigmund in a thick, hesitating voice, "and some say it was nothing better than a bagpipe—oh dear! how my head does ache!—and there *are* people who say it was a kettle-drum—nothing more or less; and Brunken is going to show that not one of them knew anything about it."

"I hope so, at least," said Brunken, with modest placidity.

"Oh, indeed!" said I, glancing a little timidly into the far recesses of the deep, ghostly room, where the firelight kept catching the sheen of metal; the yellow whiteness of ivory keys or pipes, or the polished case of some stringed instrument.

Strange, grotesque shapes loomed out in the uncertain,

flickering light; but was it not a strange and haunted chamber? Ever it seemed to me as if breaths of air blew through it, which came from all imaginable kinds of graves, and were the breaths of those departed ones who had handled the strange collection, and who wished to finger, or blow into, or beat the dumb, unvibrating things once more.

Did I say unvibrating? I was wrong, then. The strings sometimes quivered to sounds that set them trembling; something like a whispered tone I have heard from the deep, upturned throats of great brazen trumpets—something like a distant moan floating around the gilded organ-pipes. In after-days, when Friedhelm Helfen knew this room he made a wonderful fantasia about it, in which all the dumb instruments woke up, or tried to waken up to life again, for the whole place impressed him, he told me, as nothing that he had ever known before.

Brunken went on in a droning tone, giving theories of his own as to the nature of the Magrepha, and I, with my arms around Sigmund, half listened to the sleepy monotone of the good old visionary. But what spoke to me with a more potent voice was the soughing and wuthering of the sorrowful wind without, which verily moaned around the old walls, and sought out the old corners, and wailed and plained, and sobbed in a way that was enough to break one's heart.

By degrees a silence settled upon us. Brunken, having satisfactorily annihilated his enemies, ceased to speak; the fire burnt lower; Sigmund's eyes were closed; his

cheeks were not less flushed than before, nor his brow less hot, and a frown contracted it. I know not how long a time had passed, but I had no wish to rise.

The door was opened, and some one came into the room. I looked up. It was the Gräfin. Brunken rose and stood to one side, bowing.

I could not get up, but some movement of mine, perhaps, disturbed the heavy and feverish slumber of the child. He started wide awake, with a look of wild terror, and gazed down into the darkness, crying out:

"Papa, where art thou?"

A strange, startled, frightened look crossed the face of the Countess when she heard the words. She did not speak, and I said some soothing words to Sigmund.

But there could be no doubt that he was very ill. It was quite unlike his usual silent courage and reticence to wring his small hands and with ever-increasing terror turn a deaf ear to my soothings, sobbing out in tones of pain and insistence:

"Father! father! where art thou? I want thee!"

Then he began to cry pitifully, and the only word that was heard was "Father!" It was like some recurrent wail in a piece of music, which warns one all through of a coming tragedy.

"Oh dear! What is to be done? Sigmund! *Was ist denn mit dir, mein Engel?*" said the poor Countess, greatly distressed.

"He is ill," said I. "I think he has taken an illness. Does thy head ache, Sigmund?"

"Yes," said he, "it does. Where is my own father? My head never ached when I was with my father."

"*Mein Gott! mein Gott!*" said the Countess in a low tone. "I thought he had forgotten his father."

"Forgotten!" echoed I. "Frau Gräfin, he is one of yourselves. *You* do not seem to forget."

"*Herrgott!*" she exclaimed, wringing her hands. "What can be the matter with him? What must I say to Bruno? Sigmund, darling, what hast thou then? What ails thee?"

"I want my father!" he repeated. Nor would he utter any other word. The one idea, long dormant, had now taken full possession of him; in fever, half delirious, out of the fulness of his heart his mouth spake.

"Sigmund, *Liebchen*," said the Countess, "control thyself. Thy uncle must not hear thee say that word."

"I don't want my uncle. I want my *father!*" said Sigmund, looking restlessly round. "Oh, where is he? I have not seen him—it is so long, and I want him. I love him; I do love my father, and I want him."

It was pitiful, pathetic, somewhat tragic, too. The poor Countess had not the faintest idea what to do with the boy, whose illness frightened her. I suggested that he should be put to bed and the doctor sent for, as he had probably taken some complaint which would declare itself in a few days, and might be merely some childish disorder.

The Countess seized my suggestion eagerly. Sigmund was taken away. I saw him no more that night. Presently we left the Schloss and drove home.

I found a letter waiting for me from Eugen. He was still at Elberthal, and appeared to have been reproaching himself for having accepted my "sacrifice," as he called it. He spoke of Sigmund. There was more, too, in the letter, which made me both glad and sad. I felt life spreading before me, endowed with a gravity, a largeness of aim, and a dignity of purpose such as I had never dreamt of before.

It seemed that for me, too, there was work to do. I also had a love for whose sake to endure. This made me feel grave. Eugen's low spirits, and the increased bitterness with which he spoke of things, made me sad; but something else made me glad. Throughout his whole letter there breathed a passion, a warmth—restrained, but glowing through its bonds of reticent words—an eagerness which told me that at last

"As I love, loved am I."

Even after that sail down the river I had felt a half mistrust: now all doubts were removed. He loved me. He had learnt it in all its truth and breadth since we last parted. He talked of renunciation, but it was with an anguish so keen as to make me wince for him who felt it. If he tried to renounce me now, it would not be the cold laying aside of a thing for which he did not care, it would be the wrenching himself away from his heart's desire. I triumphed in the knowledge, and this was what made me glad.

Almost before we had finished breakfast in the morning,

there came thundering of wheels up to the door, and a shriek of excitement from Frau Mittendorf, who, a *Morgenhaube* on her head, a shapeless old morning gown clinging hideously about her ample figure, rushed to the window, looked out, and announced the carriage of the Frau Gräfin.

"What can she want at this early hour?" she speculated, coming into the room again and staring at us both with wide-open eyes, round with agitation and importance. "But I dare say she wishes to consult me upon some matter. I wish I were dressed more becomingly. I have heard—that is, I know, for I am so intimate with her—that she never wears *négligé*. I wonder if I should have time to——"

She stopped to hold out her hand for the note which a servant was bringing in; but her face fell when the missive was presented to *me*.

"LIEBE MAY" (it began),

"Will you come and help me in my trouble? Sigmund is *very* ill. Sometimes he is delirious. He calls for you often. It breaks my heart to find that after all not a word is uttered of *us*, but only of Eugen (burn this when you have read it), of you, and of 'Karl,' and 'Friedhelm,' and one or two other names which I do not know. I fear this petition will sound troublesome to you, who were certainly not made for trouble, but you are kind. I saw it in your face. I grieve too much. Truly the flesh is fearfully weak. I would live as if earth had no joys for me—as indeed it has none—and yet that does not prevent my suffering. May God help me! Trusting to you,

"Your

"HILDEGARDE V. ROTHENFELS."

I lost no time in complying with this summons. In a few moments I was in the carriage; ere long I was at the Schloss, was met by Countess Hildegarde, looking like a ghost that had been keeping a strict Lent, and was at last by Sigmund's bedside.

He was tossing feverishly from side to side, murmuring and muttering. But when he saw me he was still; a sweet, frank smile flitted over his face—a smile wonderfully like that which his father had lately bent upon me. He gave a little laugh, saying:

"Fräulein May! *Willkommen!* Have you brought my father? And I should like to see Friedhelm too. You and *der Vater* and Friedel used to sit near together at the concert, don't you remember? I went once, and you sang. That tall black man beat time, and my father never stopped looking at you and listening—Friedel too. I will ask them if they remember."

He laughed again at the reminiscence, and took my hand, and asked me if I remembered, so that it was with difficulty that I steadied my voice and kept my eyes from running over as I answered him. Gräfin Hildegarde behind wrung her hands and turned to the window. He did not advance any reminiscences of what had happened since he came to the Schloss.

There was no doubt that our Sigmund was very ill. A visitation of scarlet fever, of the worst kind, was raging in Lahnburg, and in the hamlet of Rothenfels, which lay about the gates of the Schloss.

Sigmund, some ten days before, had ridden with his

uncle, and waited on his pony for some time outside a row of cottages, while the Count visited one of his old servants, a man who had become an octogenarian in the service of his family, and upon whom Graf Bruno periodically shed the light of his countenance.

It was scarcely to be doubted that the boy had taken the infection then and there, and the doctor did not conceal that he had the complaint in its worst form, suppressed, and that his recovery admitted of the gravest doubts.

A short time convinced me that I must not again leave the child till the illness were decided in one way or another. He was mine now, and I felt myself in the place of Eugen, as I stood beside his bed, and told him the hard truth—that his father was not there, nor Friedhelm, nor Karl, for whom he also asked, but only I.

The day passed on. A certain conviction was growing every hour stronger within me. An incident at last decided it. I had scarcely left Sigmund's side for eight or nine hours, but I had seen nothing of the Count, nor heard his voice, nor had any mention been made of him, and remembering how he adored the boy, I was surprised.

At last Gräfin Hildegarde, after a brief absence, came into the room, and with a white face and parted lips, said to me in a half-whisper:

"*Liebe* Miss Wedderburn, will you do something for me? Will you speak to my husband?"

"To your husband!" I ejaculated.

She bowed.

"He longs to see Sigmund, but dare not come. For

me, I have hardly dared go near him since the little one began to be ill. He believes that Sigmund will die, and that he will be his murderer, having taken him out that day. I have often spoken to him about making the dear child ride too far, and now the sight of me reminds him of it; he cannot endure to look at me. Heaven help me! Why was I ever born?"

She turned away without tears—tears were not in her line—and I went, much against my will, to find the Graf.

He was in his study. Was that the same man, I wondered, whom I had seen the very day before, so strong, and full of pride and life? He raised a haggard, white, and ghastly face to me, which had aged and fallen in unspeakably. He made an effort, and rose with politeness as I came in.

"*Mein Fräulein*, you are loading us with obligations. It is quite unheard of."

But no thanks were implied in the tone—only bitterness. He was angry that I should be in the place he dared not come to.

If I had not been raised by one supreme fear above all smaller ones, I should have been afraid of this haggard, eager-looking old man—for he did look very old in his anguish. I could see the rage of jealousy with which he regarded me, and I am not naturally fond of encountering an old wolf who has starved.

But I used my utmost efforts to prevail upon him to visit his nephew, and at last succeeded. I piloted him to

Sigmund's room; led him to the boy's bedside. The sick child's eyes were closed, but he presently opened them. The uncle was stooping over him, his rugged face all working with emotion, and his voice broken as he murmured:

"*Ach, mein Liebling!* art thou then so ill?"

With a kind of shuddering cry, the boy pushed him away with both hands, crying:

"Go away! I want my father—my father, my *father*, I say! Where is he? Why do you not fetch him? You are a bad man, and you hate him."

Then I *was* frightened. The Count recoiled; his face turned deathly white—livid; his fist clenched. He glared down upon the now unrecognizing young face, and stuttered forth something, paused, then said, in a low, distinct voice, which shook me from head to foot:

"So! Better he *should* die. The brood is worthy the nest it sprang from. Where is our blood, that he whines after that hound—that *hound?*"

With which, and with a fell look around, he departed, leaving Sigmund oblivious of all that had passed, utterly indifferent and unconscious, and me shivering with fear at the outburst I had seen.

But it seemed to me that my charge was worse. I left him for a few moments, and seeking out the Countess, spoke my mind.

"Frau Gräfin, Eugen must be sent for. I fear that Sigmund is going to die, and I dare not let him die without sending for his father."

"I dare not!" said the Countess.

She had met her husband, and was flung, unnerved, upon a couch, her hand over her heart.

"But I dare, and I must do it!" said I, secretly wondering at myself. "I shall telegraph for him."

"If my husband knew!" she breathed.

"I cannot help it," said I. "Is the poor child to die amongst people who profess to *love* him, with the one wish ungratified which he has been repeating ever since he began to be ill? I do not understand such love; I call it horrible inhumanity."

"For Eugen to enter this house again!" she said in a whisper.

"I would to God that there were any other head as noble under its roof!" was my magniloquent and thoroughly earnest aspiration. "Well, *gnädige Frau*, will you arrange this matter, or shall I?"

"I dare not," she moaned, half distracted; "I dare not—but I will do nothing to prevent you. Use the whole household; they are at your command."

I lost not an instant in writing out a telegram and despatching it by a man on horseback to Lahnburg. I summoned Eugen briefly:

"Sigmund is ill. I am here. Come to us."

I saw the man depart, and then I went and told the Countess what I had done. She turned, if possible, a shade paler; then said:

"I am not responsible for it."

Then I left the poor pale lady to still her beating heart

and kill her deadly apprehensions in the embroidery of the lily of the field and the modest violet.

No change in the child's condition. A lethargy had fallen upon him. That awful stupor, with the dark, flushed cheek and heavy breath, was to me more ominous than the restlessness of fever.

I sat down and calculated. My telegram might be in Eugen's hands in the course of an hour.

When could he be here? Was it possible that he might arrive this night? I obtained the German equivalent for Bradshaw, and studied it till I thought I had made out that, supposing Eugen to receive the telegram in the shortest possible time, he *might* be here by half-past eleven that night. It was now five in the afternoon. Six hours and a half—and at the end of that time his non-arrival might tell me that he could not be here before the morrow.

I sat still, and now that the deed was done gave myself up, with my usual enlightenment and discretion, to fears and apprehensions. The terrible look and tone of Graf von Rothenfels returned to my mind in full force. Clearly it was just the most dangerous thing in the world for Eugen to do—to put in an appearance at the present time. But another glance at Sigmund somewhat reassured me. In wondering whether girl had ever before been placed in such a bizarre situation as mine, darkness overtook me.

Sigmund moved restlessly and moaned, stretching out little hot hands, and saying, "Father!"

I caught those hands to my lips, and knew that I had done right.

CHAPTER V

Vindicated

It was a wild night. Driving clouds kept hiding and revealing the stormy-looking moon. I was out of doors; I could not remain in the house; it had felt too small for me, but now nature felt too large. I dimly saw the huge pile of the Schloss defined against the gray light; sometimes when the moon unveiled herself it started out, clear and black and grim. I saw a light in a corner window —that was Sigmund's room; another in a room below— that was the Graf's study, and there the terrible man sat. I heard the wind moan amongst the trees, heard the great dogs baying from the kennels; from an open window came rich, low, mellow sounds. Old Brunken was in the music-room, playing to himself upon his violoncello. That was a movement from the *Grand Septuor*—the second movement, which is, if one may use such an expression, *painfully* beautiful. I bethought myself of the woods which lay hidden from me, the vast avenues, the lonely tanks, the grotesque statues, and that terrible figure with its arms cast upward, at the end of the long walk, and I shivered faintly.

I was some short distance down the principal avenue, and dared not go any farther. A sudden dread of the loneliness and the night-voices came upon me; my heart beating thickly, I turned to go back to the house. I would try to comfort poor Countess Hildegarde in her watching and her fears.

But that is a step near me. Some one comes up the avenue, with foot that knows its windings, its turns and twists, its ups and downs.

"Eugen!" I said tremulously.

A sudden pause—a stop; then he said, with a kind of laugh:

"Witchcraft—*Zauberei!*" and was going on.

But now I knew his whereabouts, and coming up to him, touched his arm.

"This, however, is reality!" he exclaimed, enfolding me and kissing me as he hurried on. "May, how is he?"

"Just the same," said I, clinging to him. "Oh, thank heaven that you are come!"

"I drove to the gates, and sent the fellow away. But what art thou doing alone at the Ghost's Corner on a stormy night?"

We were still walking fast towards the Schloss. My heart was beating fast, half with fear of what was impending, half with intensity of joy at hearing his voice again, and knowing what that last letter had told me.

As we emerged upon the great terrace before the house Eugen made one (the only one) momentary pause, pressed my arm, and bit his lips. I knew the meaning of it all. Then we passed quickly on. We met no one in the great stone hall—no one on the stairway or along the passages—straight he held his way, and I with him.

We entered the room. Eugen's eyes leapt swiftly to his child's face. I saw him pass his hand over his mouth. I withdrew my hand from his arm and stood aside, feeling

a tremulous thankfulness that he was here, and that that restless plaining would at last be hushed in satisfaction.

A delusion! The face over which my lover bent did not brighten; nor the eyes recognize him. The child did not know the father for whom he had yearned out his little heart—he did not hear the half-frantic words spoken by that father as he flung himself upon him, kissing him, beseeching him, conjuring him with every foolish word of fondness that he could think of, to speak, answer, look up once again.

Then fear, terror overcame the man—for the first time I saw him look pale with apprehension.

"Not this cup—not this!" muttered he. "*Gott im Himmel!* anything short of this. I will give him up—leave him—anything—only let him live!"

He had flung himself, unnerved, trembling, upon a chair by the bedside—his face buried in his hands. I saw the sweat stand upon his brow—I could do nothing to help—nothing but wish despairingly that some blessed miracle would reverse the condition of the child and me—lay me low in death upon that bed—place him safe and sound in his father's arms.

Is it not hard, you father of many children, to lose *one* of them? Do you not grudge Death his prize? But this man had but the one; the love between them was such a love as one meets perhaps once in a lifetime. The child's life had been a mourning to him, the father's a burden, ever since they had parted.

I felt it strange that *I* should be trying to comfort *him*,

and yet it was so: it was his brow which leaned on my shoulder; it was he who was faint with anguish, so that he could scarce see or speak—his hand that was cold and nerveless. It was I who said:

"Do not despair: I hope still."

"If he is dying," said Eugen, "he shall die in my arms."

With which, as if the idea were a dreary kind of comfort, he started up, folded Sigmund in a shawl, and lifted him out of bed, enfolding him in his arms, and pillowing his head upon his breast.

It was a terrible moment, yet, as I clung to his arm, and with him looked into *our* darling's face, I felt that von Francius' words, spoken long ago to my sister, contained a deep truth. This joy, so like a sorrow—would I have parted with it? A thousand times no!

Whether the motion and movement roused him or whether that were the crisis of some change, I know not. Sigmund's eyes opened. He bent them upon the face above him, and after a pause of reflection said, in a voice whose utter satisfaction passed anything I had ever heard: "My own father!" released a pair of little wasted arms from his covering, and clasped them round Eugen's neck, putting his face close to his, and kissing him as if no number of kisses could ever satisfy him.

Upon this scene, as Eugen stood in the middle of the room, his head bent down—a smile upon his face which no ultimate griefs could for the moment quench, there entered the Countess.

Her greeting, after six years of absence, separation, belief in his dishonesty, was a strange one. She came quickly forward, laid her hand on his arm, and said:

"Eugen, it is dreadfully infectious! Don't kiss the child in that way, or you will take the fever and be laid up too."

He looked up, and at his look a shock passed across her face; with pallid cheeks and parted lips she gazed at him, speechless.

His mind, too, seemed to bridge the gulf—it was in a strange tone that he answered:

"Ah, Hildegarde! What does it matter what becomes of me? Leave me this!"

"No, not that, Eugen," said I, going up to him, and I suppose something in my eyes moved him, for he gave the child into my arms in silence.

The Countess had stood looking at him. She strove for silence; sought tremulously after coldness, but in vain.

"Eugen—" She came nearer, and looked more closely at him. "*Herrgott!* how you are altered! What a meeting! I—can it be six years ago?—and now—oh!" Her voice broke into a very wail, "We loved you—*why did you deceive us?*"

My heart stood still. Would he stand this test? It was the hardest he had had. Gräfin Hildegarde had been—was dear to him. That he was dear to her—intensely dear; that love for him was entwined about her very heart-strings stood confessed now. "*Why did you deceive us?*" It sounded more like "Tell us we may trust you; make us

happy again!" One word from him, and the poor sad lady would have banished from her heart the long-staying, unwelcome guest—belief in his falseness, and closed it away from her for ever.

He was spared the dreadful necessity of answering her. A timid summons from her maid at the door told her the Count wanted to speak to her, and she left us quickly.

* * * * *

Sigmund did not die: he recovered, and lives now. But with that I am not at present concerned.

It was the afternoon following that never-to-be-forgotten night. I had left Eugen watching beside Sigmund, who was sleeping, his hand jealously holding two of his father's fingers.

I intended to call at Frau Mittendorf's door to say that I could not yet return there, and when I came back, said Eugen, he would have something to tell me; he was going to speak with his brother—to tell him that we should be married, "and to speak about Sigmund," he added decisively. "I will not risk such a thing as this again. If you had not been here he might have died without my knowing it. I feel myself absolved from all obligation to let him remain. My child's happiness shall not be further sacrificed."

With this understanding I left him. I went towards the Countess's room, to speak to her, and tell her of Sigmund before I went out. I heard voices ere I entered the room, and *when* I entered it I stood still, and a sickly apprehension clutched my very heart. There stood my evil genius

—the *böse Geist* of my lover's fate—Anna Sartorius. And the Count and Countess were present, apparently waiting for her to begin to speak.

"You are here," said the Gräfin to me. "I was just about to send for you. This lady says she knows you."

"She does," said I hesitatingly.

Anna looked at me. There was gravity in her face, and the usual cynical smile in her eyes.

"You are surprised to see me," said she. "You will be still more surprised to hear that I have journeyed all the way from Elberthal to Lahnburg on your account, and for your benefit."

I did not believe her, and composing myself as well as I could, sat down. After all, what could she do to harm me? She could not rob me of Eugen's heart, and she had already done her worst against him and his fair name.

Anna had a strong will: she exerted it. Graf Bruno was looking in some surprise at the unexpected guest; the Countess sat rigidly upright, with a puzzled look, as if at the sight of Anna she recalled some far-past scene. Anna compelled their attention; she turned to me, saying:

"Please remain here, Miss Wedderburn. What I have to say concerns you as much as any one here. You wonder who I am, and what business I have to intrude myself upon you," she added to the others.

"I confess——" began the Countess, and Anna went on:

"You, *gnädige Frau*, have spoken to me before, and I to you. I see you remember, or feel you ought to

remember me. I will recall the occasion of our meeting to your mind. You once called at my father's house—he was a music teacher—to ask about lessons for some friend or protégée of yours. My father was engaged at the moment, and I invited you to my sitting-room and endeavored to begin a conversation with you. You were very distant and very proud, scarcely deigning to answer me. When my father came into the room, I left it. But I could not help laughing at your treatment of me. You little knew from your shut-up, *cossue* existence amongst the lofty ones of the earth, what influence even such insignificant persons as I might have upon your lot. At that time I was the intimate friend of, and in close correspondence with, a person who afterwards became one of your family. Her name was Vittoria Leopardi, and she married your brother-in-law, Graf Eugen."

The plain-spoken, plain-looking woman had her way. She had the same power as that which shone in the "glittering eye" of the Ancient Mariner. Whether we liked or not we gave her our attention. All were listening now, and we listened to the end.

"Vittoria Leopardi was the Italian governess at General von ——'s in ——. At one time she had several music lessons from my father. That was how I became acquainted with her. She was very beautiful—almost as beautiful as you, Miss Wedderburn, and I, dull and plain myself, have a keen appreciation of beauty and of the gentleness which does *not* always accompany it. When I first knew her she was lonely and strange, and I tried to

befriend her. I soon began to learn what a singular mixture of sordid worldliness and vacant weakmindedness dwelt behind her fair face. She wrote to me often, for she was one of the persons who must have *some one* to whom to relate their 'triumphs' and conquests, and I suppose I was the only person she could get to listen to her.

"At that time—the time you called at our house, *gnädige Frau*—her epistles were decidedly tedious. What sense she had—there was never too much of it—was completely eclipsed. At last came the announcement that her noble and gallant Uhlan had proposed, and been accepted—naturally. She told me what he was, and his possessions and prospects; his chief merit in her eyes appeared to be that he would let her do *anything* she liked, and release her from the drudgery of teaching, for which she never had the least affinity. She hated children. She never on any occasion hinted that she loved him very much.

"In due time the marriage, as you all know, came off. She almost dropped me then, but never completely so; I suppose she had that instinct which stupid people often have as to the sort of people who may be of use to them sometime. I received no invitations to her house. She used awkwardly to apologize for the negligence sometimes, and say she was so busy, and it would be no compliment to me to ask me to meet all those stupid people of whom the house was always full.

"That did not trouble me much, though I loved her none the better for it. She had become more a study to me now than anything I really cared for. Occasionally I

used to go and see her, in the morning, before she had left her room; and once, and once only, I met her husband in the corridor. He was hastening away to his duty, and scarcely saw me as I hurried past. Of course I knew him by sight as well as possible. Who did not? Occasionally she came to me to recount her triumphs and make me jealous. She did not wish to reign supreme in her husband's heart; she wished idle men to pay her compliments. Everybody in —— knew of the extravagance of that household, and the reckless, neck-or-nothing habits of its master. People were indignant with him that he did not reform. I say it would have been easier for him to find his way alone up the Matterhorn in the dark than to reform—after his marriage.

"There had been hope for him before—there was none afterwards. A pretty inducement to reform, she offered him! I knew that woman through and through, and I tell you that never lived a more selfish, feeble, vain, and miserable thing. All was self—self—self. When she was mated to a man who never did think of self—whose one joy was to be giving, whose generosity was no less a by-word than his recklessness, who was delighted if she expressed a wish, and would move heaven and earth to gratify it; the more eagerly the more unreasonable it was —*mes amis*, I think it is easy to guess the end—the end was ruin. I watched it coming on, and I thought of you, Frau Gräfin. Vittoria was expecting her confinement in the course of a few months. I never heard her express a hope as to the coming child, never a word of joy, never a

thought as to the wider cares which a short time would bring to her. She did say often, with a sigh, that women with young children were so tied: they could not do this, and they could not do that. She was in great excitement when she was invited to come here: in great triumph when she returned.

"Eugen, she said, was a fool not to conciliate his brother and that doating old saint (her words, *gnädige Frau*, not mine) more than he did. It was evident that they would do anything for him if he only flattered them, but he was so insanely downright—she called it stupid, she said. The idea of missing such advantages when a few words of common politeness would have secured them. I may add that what she called 'common politeness' was just the same thing that I called smooth hypocrisy.

"Very shortly after this her child was born. I did not see her then. Her husband lost all his money on a race, and came to smash, as you English say. She wrote to me. She was in absolute need of money, she said; Eugen had not been able to give her any. He had said they must retrench. Retrench! was that what she married him for? There was a set of turqouises that she must have, or another woman would get them, and then she would die. And her milliner, a most unreasonable woman, had sent word that she must be paid.

"So she was grumbling in a letter which I received one afternoon, and the next I was frightfully startled to see her herself. She came in, and said smilingly that she was going to ask a favor of me. Would I take her cab on

to the bank and get a check cashed for her? She did not want to go there herself. And then she explained how her brother-in-law had given her a check for a thousand thaler—was it not kind of him? It really did not enter my head at the moment to think there was anything wrong about the check. She had indorsed it, and I took it, received the money for it, and brought it to her. She trembled so as she took it, and was so remarkably quiet about it, that it suddenly flashed upon my mind that there must be something not as it ought to be about it.

"I asked her a question or two, and she said, deliberately contradicting herself, that the Herr Graf had not given it to her, but to her husband, and then she went away, and I was sure I should hear more about it. I did. She wrote to me in the course of a few days saying she wished she were dead, since Eugen, by his wickedness, had destroyed every chance of happiness; she might as well be a widow. She sent me a package of letters—my letters—and asked me to keep them, together with some other things, an old desk amongst the rest. She had no means of destroying them all, and she did not choose to carry them to Rothenfels, whither she was going, to be buried alive with those awful people.

"I accepted the charge. For five—no, six years, the desk, the papers, everything lay with some other possessions of mine which I could not carry about with me on the wandering life I led after my father's death—stored in an old trunk in the lumber-room of a cousin's house. I visited that house last week.

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"Certain circumstances which have occurred of late years induced me to look over those papers. I burnt the old bundle of letters from myself to her, and then I looked through the desk. In a pigeon-hole I found these."

She handed some pieces of paper to Graf Bruno, who looked at them. I, too, have seen them since. They bore the imitations of different signatures: her husband's, Graf Bruno's, that of Anna Sartorius, and others which I did not know.

The same conviction as that which had struck Anna flashed into the eyes of Graf von Rothenfels.

"I found those," repeated Anna, "and I knew in a second who was the culprit. He, your brother, is no criminal. *She* forged the signature of Herr Graf——"

"*Who* forged the signature of the Herr Graf?" asked a voice which caused me to start up, which brought all our eyes from Anna's face, upon which they had been fastened, and showed us Eugen standing in the doorway, with compressed lips and eyes that looked from one to the other of us anxiously.

"Your wife," said Anna calmly. And before any one could speak she went on: "I have helped to circulate the lie about you, Herr Graf"—she spoke to Eugen—"for I disliked you; I disliked your family, and I disliked, or rather wished to punish, Miss Wedderburn for her behavior to me. But I firmly believed the story I circulated. The moment I knew the truth I determined to set you right. Perhaps I was pleased to be able to circumvent your plans.

"I considered that if I told the truth to Friedhelm

Helfen he would be as silent as yourself, *because* you chose to be silent. The same with May Wedderburn, therefore I decided to come to headquarters at once. It is useless for you to try to appear guilty any longer," she added mockingly. "You can tell them all the rest, and I will wish you good-afternoon."

She was gone. From that day to this I have never seen her nor heard of her again. Probably with her power over us her interest in us ceased.

Meanwhile I had released myself from the spell which held me, and gone to the Countess. Something very like fear held me from approaching Eugen.

Count Bruno had gone to his brother, and touched his shoulder. Eugen looked up. Their eyes met. It just flashed into my mind that after six years of separation the first words were—must be—words of reconciliation, of forgiveness asked on the one side, eagerly extended on the other.

"Eugen!" in a trembling voice, and then, with a positive sob, "canst thou forgive?"

"My brother—I have not resented. I could not. Honor in thee, as honor in me——"

"But that thou wert doubted, hated, mistak——"

But another had asserted herself. The Countess had come to herself again, and going up to him, looked him full in the face and kissed him.

"Now I can die happy! What folly, Eugen! and folly like none but thine. I might have known——"

A faint smile crossed his lips. For all the triumphant vindication, he looked very pallid.

"I have often wondered, Hildegarde, how so proud a woman as you could so soon accept the worthlessness of a pupil on whom she had spent such pains as you upon me. I learnt my best notions of honor and chivalry from you. You might have credited me rather with trying to carry the lesson out than with plucking it away and casting it from me at the first opportunity."

"You have much to forgive," said she.

"Eugen, you came to see me on business," said his brother.

Eugen turned to me. I turned hot and then cold. This was a terrible ordeal indeed. He seem metamorphosed into an exceedingly grand personage as he came to me, took my hand, and said, very proudly and very gravely:

"The first part of my business related to Sigmund. It will not need to be discussed now. The rest was to tell you that this young lady—in spite of having heard all that could be said against me—was still not afraid to assert her intention to honor me by becoming my wife and sharing my fate. Now that she has learnt the truth—May, do you still care for me enough to marry me?"

"If so," interrupted his brother, before I could speak, "let me add my petition and that of my wife—do you allow me, Hildegarde?"

"Indeed yes, yes!"

"That she will honor us and make us happy by entering our family, which can only gain by the acquisition of such beauty and excellence."

The idea of being entreated by Graf Bruno to marry his

brother almost overpowered me. I looked at Eugen and stammered out something inaudible, confused, too, by the look he gave me.

He was changed; he was more formidable now than before, and he led me silently up to his brother without a word, upon which Count Bruno crowned my confusion by uttering some more very Grandisonian words and gravely saluting my cheek. That was certainly a terrible moment, but from that day to this I have loved better and better my haughty brother-in-law.

Half in consideration for me, I believe, the Countess began:

"But I want to know, Eugen, about this. I don't quite understand yet, how you managed to shift the blame upon yourself."

"Perhaps he does not want to tell," said I hastily.

"Yes; since the truth is known, I may tell the rest," said he. "It was a very simple matter. After all was lost, my only ray of comfort was that I could pay my debts by selling everything, and throwing up my commission. But when I thought of my wife I felt a devil. I suppose that is the feeling which the devils do experience in place of love—at least Heine says so:

"'Die Teufel nennen es Höllenqual,
Die Menschen nennen es Liebe.'

"I kept it from her as long as I could. It was a week after Sigmund was born that at last one day I *had* to tell her. I actually looked to her for advice, help. It was

tolerably presumptuous in me, I must say, after what I had brought her to. She brought me to reason. May heaven preserve men from needing such lessons! She reproached me—ay, she *did* reproach me. I thank my good genius, or whatever it is that looks after us, that I could set my teeth and not answer her a syllable."

"The minx!" said the Countess aside to me, "I would have shaken her."

"'What was she to do without a *groschen?*' she concluded, and I could only say that I had had thoughts of dropping my military career and taking to music in good earnest. I had never been able to neglect it, even in my worst time, for it was a passion with me. She said:

"'A composer—a beggar!' That was hard.

"I asked her, 'Will you not help me?'

"'Never to degrade yourself in that manner,' she assured me.

"Considering that I had deserved my punishment, I left her. I sat up all night, I remember, thinking over what I had brought her to, and wondering what I could do for her. I wondered if you, Bruno, would help *her* and let me go away and work out my punishment, for, believe me, I never thought of shirking it. I *had* been most effectually brought to reason, and your example, and yours, Hildegarde, had taught me a different kind of moral fibre to that.

"I brought your note about the check to Vittoria, and asked her if she knew anything about it. She looked at me, and in that instant I knew the truth. She

did not once attempt to deny it. I do not know what, in my horrible despair and shame, I may have said or done.

"I was brought to my senses by seeing her cowering before me, with her hands before her face, and begging me not to kill her. I felt what a brute I must have been, but that kind of brutality has been knocked out of me long ago. I raised her, and asked her to forgive me, and bade her keep silence and see no one, and I would see that she did not suffer for it.

"Everything seemed to stand clearly before me. If I had kept straight, the poor ignorant thing would never have been tempted to such a thing. I settled my whole course in half an hour, and have never departed from it since.

"I wrote that letter to you, and went and read it to my wife. I told her that I could never forgive *myself* for having caused her such unhappiness, and that I was going to release her from me. I only dropped a vague hint about the boy at first; I was stooping over his crib to say good-by to him. She said, 'What am *I* to do with him?' I caught at the idea, and she easily let me take him. I asked Hugo von Meilingen to settle affairs for me; and left that night. Thanks to you, Bruno, the story never got abroad. The rest you know."

"What did you tell Hugo von Meilingen?"

"Only that I had made a mess of everything and broken my wife's heart, which he did not seem to believe. He was staunch. He settled up everything. Some day I



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will thank him for it. For two years I travelled about a good deal. Sigmund has been more a citizen of the world than he knows. I had so much facility of execution——"

"So much *genius*, you mean," I interposed.

"That I never had any difficulty in getting an engagement. I saw a wonderful amount of life of a certain kind, and learnt most thoroughly to despise my own past, and to entertain a thorough contempt for those who are still leading such lives. I have learnt German history in my banishment. I have lived with our true heroes—the lower middle-classes."

"Well, well! You were always a radical, Eugen," said the Count indulgently.

"At last, at Köln, I obtained the situation of first violinist in the Elberthal Kapelle, and I went over there one wet October afternoon, and saw the director, von Francius. He was busy, and referred me to the man who was next below me, Friedhelm Helfen."

Eugen paused, and choked down some little emotion ere he added:

"You must know him. I trust to have his friendship till death separate us. He is a nobleman of nature's most careful making—a knight *sans peur et sans reproche*. When Sigmund came here it was he who saved me from doing something desperate or drivelling—there is not much of a step between the two. Fräulein Sartorius, who seems to have a peculiar disposition, took it into her head to confront me with a charge of my guilt at a public place.

Friedhelm never wavered, despite my shame and my inability to deny the charge."

"Oh dear, how beautiful!" said the Countess in tears. "We must have him over here and see a great deal of him."

"We must certainly know him, and that soon," said Count Bruno.

At this juncture I, from mingled motives, stole from the room, and found my way to Sigmund's bedside, where also joy awaited me. The stupor and the restlessness had alike vanished: he was in a deep sleep. I knelt down by the bedside and remained there long.

Nothing, then, was to be as I had planned it. There would be no poverty, no shame to contend against—no struggle to make, except the struggle up to the standard—so fearfully severe and unapproachable, set up by my own husband. Set up and *acted upon* by him. How could I ever attain it or anything near it? Should I not be constantly shocking him by coarse, gross notions as to the needlessness of this or that fine point of conduct? by my ill-defined ideas as to a code of honor—my slovenly ways of looking at questions?

It was such a fearful height, this to which he had carried his notions and behavior in the matter of chivalry and loyalty. How was I ever to help him to carry it out, and, moreover, to bring up this child before me, and perhaps children of my own in the same rules?

It was no doubt a much more brilliant destiny which actually awaited me, than any which I had anticipated—

the wife of a nobleman, with the traditions of a long line of noblemen and noblewomen to support, and a husband with the most impossible ideas upon the subject.

I felt afraid. I thought of that poor, vain, selfish first wife, and I wondered if ever the time might come when I might fall in his eyes as she had fallen, for scrupulous though he was to cast no reproach upon her, I felt keenly that he despised her, that had she lived after that dreadful discovery he would never have loved her again. It was awful to think of. True, I should never commit forgery; but I might, without knowing it, fail in some other way, and then—woe to me!

Thus dismally cogitating I was roused by a touch on my shoulder and a kiss on the top of my head. Eugen was leaning over me, laughing.

"You have been saying your prayers so long that I was sure you must be asking too much."

I confided some of my doubts and fears to him, for with his actual presence that dreadful height of morality seemed to dwindle down. He was human too—quick, impulsive, a very mortal. And he said:

"I would ask thee one thing, May. Thou dost not seem to see what makes all the difference. I loved Vittoria: I longed to make some sacrifice for her, would she but have let me. But she could not, poor girl! She did not love me."

"Well?"

"Well! *Mein Engel*—you do," said he, laughing.

"Oh, I see!" said I, feeling myself blushing violently.

Yes, it was true. Our union should be different from that former one. After all it was pleasant to find that the high tragedy which we had so wisely planned for ourselves had made a *faux pas* and come ignominiously to ground.

CHAPTER VI

"And surely, when all this is past
They shall not want their rest at last."

On the 23d of December—I will not say how few or how many years after those doings and that violent agitation which my friend Gräfin May has striven to make coherent in the last chapter—I, with my greatcoat on my arm, stood waiting for the train which was to bear me ten miles away from the sleepy old musical ducal *Hauptstadt*, in which I am *Herzoglicher Kapellmeister*, to Rothenfels, where I was bidden to spend Christmas.

I had not long to wait. Having ascertained that my bag was safe, in which reposed divers humble proofs of my affection for the friends of the past, I looked leisurely out as the train came in, for a second-class carriage, and very soon found what I wanted. I shook hands with an acquaintance, and leaned out of the window, talking to him till the train started. Then for the first time I began to look at my fellow-traveller; a lady, and most distinctly not one of my own countrywomen, who, whatever else they may excel in, emphatically do not know how to clothe themselves for travelling. Her veil was down, but her face was turned towards me, and I thought I knew some-

thing of the grand sweep of the splendid shoulders, and majestic bearing of the stately form. She soon raised her veil, and looking at me said, with a grave bow:

"Herr Helfen, how do you do?"

"Ah, pardon me, *gnädige Frau;* for the moment I did not recognize you. I hope you are well."

"Quite well, thank you," said she, with grave courtesy; but I saw that her beautiful face was thin and worn, her pallor greater than ever.

She had never been a person much given to mirthfulness; but now she looked as if all smiles had passed for ever from her lips—a certain secret sat upon them, and closed them in an outline, sweet, but utterly impenetrable.

"You are going to Rothenfels, I presume?" she said.

"Yes. And you also?"

"I also—somewhat against my will; but I did not want to hurt my sister's feelings. It is the first time I have left home since my husband's death."

I bowed. Her face did not alter. Calm, sad, and staid—whatever storms had once shaken that proud heart, they were lulled for ever now.

Two years ago Adelaide von Francius had buried keen grief and sharp anguish, together with vivid hope or great joy, with her noble husband, whom we had mourned bitterly then, whom we yet mourn in our hearts, and whom we shall continue to mourn as long as we live.

May's passionate conviction that he and she should meet again had been fulfilled. They had met, and each had

found the other unchanged; and Adelaide had begun to yield to the conviction that her sister's love was love, pure and simple, and not pity. Since his death she had continued to live in the town in which their married life had been passed—a life which for her was just beginning to be happy—that is to say, she was just learning to allow herself to be happy, in the firm assurance of his unalterable love and devotion, when the summons came: a sharp attack, a short illness, all over—eyes closed, lips too, silent before her for evermore.

It has often been my fate to hear criticisms both on von Francius and his wife, and upon their conduct. This I know, that she never forgave herself the step she had taken in her despair. Her pride never recovered from the burden laid upon it—that she had taken the initiative, had followed the man who had said farewell to her. Bad her lot was to be, sad, and joyless, whether in its gilded cage, or linked with the man whom she loved, but to be with whom she had had to pay so terrible a price. I have never heard her complain of life or the world; yet she can find neither very sweet, for she is an extremely proud woman, who has made two terrible failures in her affairs.

Von Francius, before he died, had made a mark not to be erased in the hearts of his musical compatriots. Had he lived—but that is vain! Still one feels—one cannot but feel—that, as his widow said to me, with matter-of-fact composure:

"He was much more hardly to be spared than such a person as I, Herr Helfen. If I might have died and left

him to enrich and gladden the world, I should have felt that I had not made such a mess of everything after all."

Yet she never referred to him as "My poor husband," or by any of those softening terms by which some people approach the name of a dead dear one; all the same we knew quite well that with him life had died for her.

Since his death, she and I had been in frequent communication; she was editing a new edition of his works, for which, after his death, there had been an instant call. It had lately been completed; and the music of our former friend shall, if I mistake not, become, in the best and highest sense of the word, popular music—the people's music. I had been her eager and, she was pleased to say, able assistant in the work.

We journeyed on together through the winter country, and I glanced at her now and then—at the still pale face which rose above her English-fashioned sealskin, and wondered how it was that some faces, though never so young and beautiful, have written upon them in unmistakable characters, "The End," as one saw upon *her* face. Still, we talked about all kinds of matters—musical, private, and public. I asked if she went out at all.

"Only to concerts with the von ——s, who have been friends of mine ever since I went to ——," she replied; and then the train rolled into the station of Lahnburg.

There was a group of faces I knew waiting to meet us.

"Ah, there is my sister Stella," said Adelaide in a low voice. "How she is altered! And that is May's husband, I suppose. I remember his face now that I see it."

We had been caught sight of. Four people came crowding round us. Eugen—my eyes fell upon him first—we grasped hands silently. His wife, looking lovelier than ever in her winter furs and feathers. A tall boy in a sealskin cap—my Sigmund—who had been hanging on his father's arm, and whose eyes welcomed me more volubly than his tongue, which was never given to excessive wagging.

May and Frau von Francius went home in a carriage which Sigmund, under the direction of an awful-looking *Kutscher*, drove.

Stella, Eugen, and I walked to Rothenfels, and they quarrelled, as they always did, while I listened and gave an encouraging word to each in turn. Stella Wedderburn was very beautiful; and after spending Christmas at Rothenfels, she was going home to be married. Eugen, May, and Sigmund were going too, for the first time since May's marriage.

Graf Bruno that year had temporarily abdicated his throne, and Eugen had been constituted host for the season. The guests were his and his wife's; the arrangements were his, and the entertainment fell to his share.

Gräfin Hildegarde looked a little amazed at such of her guests, for instance, as Karl Linders. She had got over the first shock of seeing me a regular visitor in the house, and was pleased to draw me aside on this occasion and inform me that really that young man, Herr Linders, was presentable—quite presentable—and never forgot himself; he had handed her into her carriage yesterday, really *quite* credi-

tably. No doubt it was long friendship with Eugen which had given him that extra polish.

"Indeed, Frau Gräfin, he was always like that. It is natural."

"He is very presentable, really—very. But as a friend of Eugen's," and she smiled condescendingly upon me, "he would naturally be so."

In truth, Karl was Karl. "Time had not thinned *his* flowing locks"; he was as handsome, as impulsive, and as true as ever; had added two babies to his responsibilities, who, with his beloved *Frau Gemahlin*, had likewise been bidden to this festivity, but had declined to quit the stove and private Christmas-tree of home life. He wore no more short jackets now; his sister Gretchen was engaged to a young doctor, and Karl's head was growing higher—as it deserved—for it had no mean or shady deeds to bow it.

The company then consisted *in toto* of Graf and Gräfin von Rothenfels, who, I must record it, both looked full ten years younger and better since their prodigal was returned to them, of Stella Wedderburn, Frau von Francius, Karl Linders, and Friedhelm Helfen. May, as I said, looked lovelier than ever. It was easy to see that she was the darling of the elder brother and his wife. She was a radiant, bright creature, yet her deepest affections were given to sad people—to her husband, to her sister Adelaide, to Countess Hildegarde.

She and Eugen are well mated. It is true he is not a very cheerful man—his face is melancholy. In his eyes is a shadow which never wholly disappears—lines upon his

broad and tranquil brow which are indelible. He has honor and titles, and a name clean and high before men, but it was not always so. That terrible bringing to reason —that six years' grinding lesson of suffering, self-suppression—ay, self-effacement—have left their marks, a "shadow plain to see," and will never leave him. He is a different man from the outcast who stepped forth into the night with a weird upon him, nor ever looked back till it was dreed out in darkness to its utmost term.

He has tasted of the sorrows—the self-brought sorrows which make merry men into sober ones, the sorrows which test a man and prove his character to be of gold or of dross, and therefore he is grave. Grave too is the son, who is more worshipped by both him and his wife than any of their other children. Sigmund von Rothenfels is what outsiders call "a strange, incomprehensible child"; seldom smiles, and has no child friends. His friends are his father and "Mother May"—*Mütterchen* he calls her; and it is quaint sometimes to see how on an equality the three meet and associate. His notions of what it is fit for a man to be and do, he takes from his father; his ideal woman—I am sure he has one—would, I believe, turn out to be a subtle and impossible compound of May and his Aunt Hildegarde.

We sometimes speculate as to what he will turn out. Perhaps the musical genius which his father will not bring before the world in himself, may one day astonish that world in Sigmund. It is certain that his very life seems bound up in the art, and in that house and that circle it

must be a very Caliban, or something yet lower, which could resist the influence.

One day May, Eugen, Karl, and I, repaired to the music-room and played together the Fourth Symphony and some of Schumann's *Kinderscenen*, but May began to cry before it was over, and the rest of us had thoughts that did lie too deep for tears—thoughts of that far-back afternoon of Carnival Monday, and how we "made a sunshine in a shady place"—of all that came before—and after.

Between me and Eugen there has never come a cloud, nor the faintest shadow of one. Builded upon days passed together in storm and sunshine, weal and woe, good report and evil report, our union stands upon a firm foundation of that nether rock of friendship, perfect trust, perfect faith, love stronger than death, which makes a peace in our hearts, a mighty influence in our lives which very truly "passeth understanding."

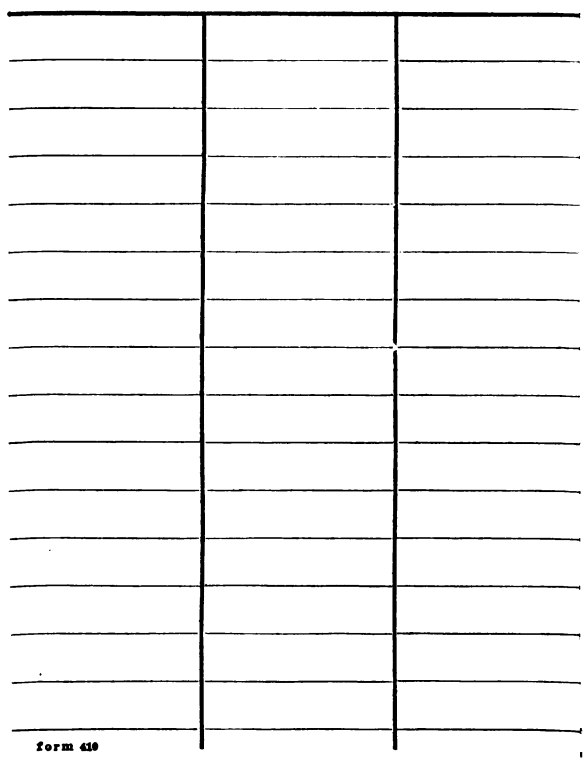
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